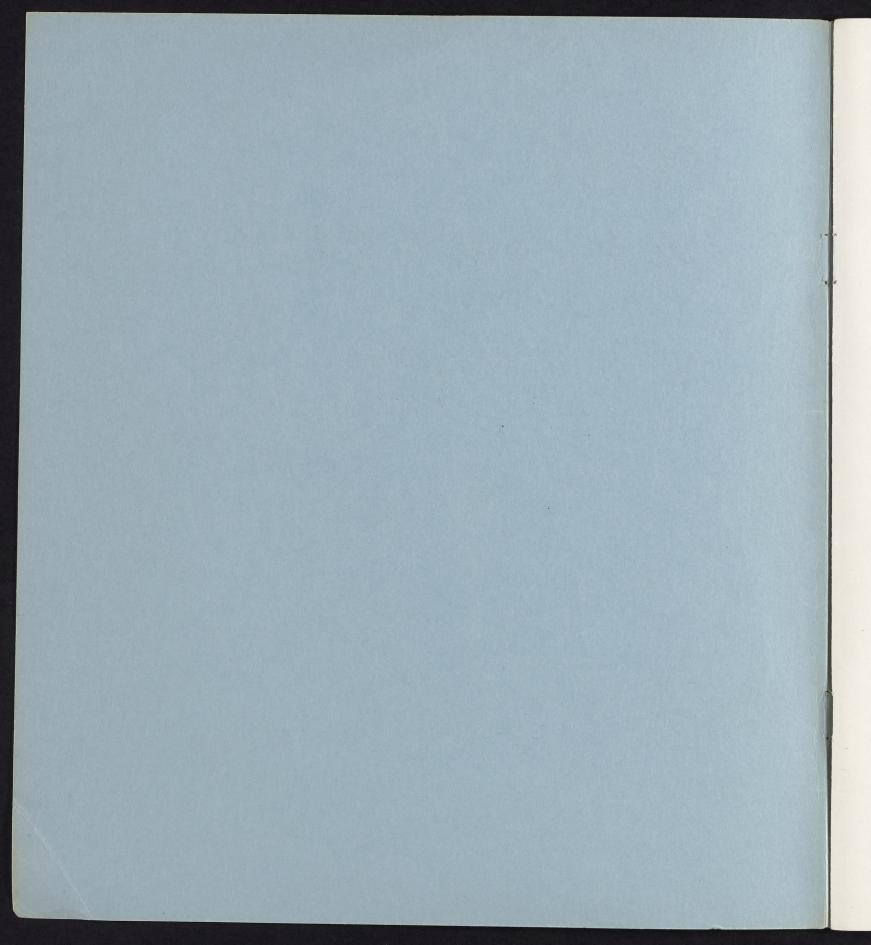
GAY GAY GAY GAY GAY GAY LITERATURE

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DISPLAY WINDOW DENIZENS

by John Mitzel

"Morning, Alice!"

Smile. Don't let her ask.

Alice worked in Housewares. "Oh, hi, Ralph."

"Behold the advancing legions." Their faces were pressed against the glass doors, though still locked, as though on the starting line for a consumer rampage.

"What have we done to deserve them?" she joshed.

Live.

Today Ralph had to come up with new displays for windows 8 through 15. Time for a graduation scene, something with caps and gowns, maybe. Use some of those male mannequins—ick! Tie-in with Father's Day. See what the copy-writers have come up with.

His office was not much more than just a cubicle tucked around the corner from Junior Sportswear. Visitors invariably stood in the doorway, unable to enter such small quarters. It was here that Ralph conceived the ideas which weekly transformed Gorstein's and Lannembaker's fifteen display windows into new worlds. For close to ten years, Ralph had mimicked elusive universes behind these plate glass windows. And for the last three years, he had been given total control over them. This was his domain, an emperor of images. Among display department workers, copywriters, ad men, commercial artists, and sales

representatives all over town, Ralph had achieved an unmatched reputation for creativity in the retail trade.

But was he happy?

Think how many people would love to see me fail.

...was one way he had to prod himself constantly to excellence.

In his office Ralph threw his jacket on the chair. He coughed, lit a cigarette, coughed again. The pack would be emply before noon.

Where the hell was Michael all weekend? He just walks in ever so casually at seven this morning, doesn't even say how-dee-do, goes right to bed. He didn't even expect me to get mad. He's such an arrogant little son-of-a-bitch! Well, this time I'll show him. He's pushed me to the wall.

Ralph found himself making a few sketches. He threw them away. He couldn't concentrate on his work. **Damn Michael.** What was it they wanted displayed next week? He flipped through scattered memos, bits of copy, catalogues.

Cocktail dresses. Cocktail dresses? Do women still buy them? Ralph knew few women socially, and most of his male friends were alcoholics who rarely wore dresses. He knew immediately it was a bad choice. He couldn't do it without nostalgia for yesterday's fashions, back when display had been fun, when he

sincerely believed that there was a world of elegance to which he could belong. How many years ago was that?

A tennis motif would be better. Give Arlene and Cheryl a chance for some exercise.

Arlene and Cheryl were his private names for two of his favorite female mannequins.

Yes, A Vision In White...clean...-cool...smart! Pleated feminine tennis skirts with short sassy sweaters. Could even have a fan at the side of the window to fluff the skirts. But as Ralph knew so well, one runs risks with any animation. Nature morte.

"Ralph?" It was Anton, one of his display department assistants. He got Anton from Anthony (whereas most people would extract just plain Tony). "Got a minute? The guys up in the shop told me they haven't received the rolls of corrugated paper yet, so we may have to postpone our Miss Resortwear plans in windows 1 through 7 until it comes in."

"Well, in that case we'll go ahead with the Sunflower alternative—California Casuals."

Anton winched. "Oh dear. That sunflower scene is such a back number, don't you think? And I've heard that Jutton's has a great theme lined up for next week. I'd hate to let them catch us with our pants down."

Jutton's was Jutton, Hartley Co., the other large department store in town and, as it turned out, just across the street. The major display windows of the two stores faced each other down the avenue, each offering up its peek-a-boo glimpses into simpler worlds where all problems, it seemed, were solved through purchases of decorative, quasi-functional consumer items. It was understood that there existed a friendly competition between the display departments of the two stores.

Friendly?
Page 4

After a fashion, though last week, very early Wednesday morning as Anton and Geoff were touching up their current "Catch Yourself in Anne Klein Co-Ordinates" display, Anton stopped for a minute to smile and wave at the guys in the windows at Jutton's. They returned his greeting. "Silly queens," he snorted through his smile. "I swear, everything they do in those windows is so tacky! Ever notice how the shoes they put on the mannequins are always just a little too large?"

"They're not always so bad, Anton. Don't you remember their Easter Bunny display? I thought that was pretty clever."

"Well, I suppose. 'Course they haven't anything near our budget to play with. And what good's imagination without money? Wish we'd get the morning light like they do, though."

It was true that, on the whole, the windows at Gorstein's were more "professional," more attentive to detail, more inviting to a precious tranquility. Somehow, one knew, upon inspection, that these images were created with, if not love, then conviction.

Ralph tossed his pencil on his desk.

"I don't know. What do you think we should do, Anton? I just can't get anything clear this morning." He closed his eyes and rubbed the bridge of his nose.

Why can't I have a lover who's considerate, someone like Anton? He's Michael's age. Michael could even be a little older. Anton's kind of effeminate, but, Christ, you'd think I'd learn. So I chase the butchies. Has it ever lasted very long? Has it ever brought me more than the shortest happiness? One wedding night each time around—big deal! Then what? Has any of them ever left me with more than insults and pain?

"Can I be perfectly honest with you, Ralph?"

"Please."

"Well, I was going over tomorrow's Summer Scenes display, and the drawings seemed just...well...not up to your usual standards. They struck me as droopy. Is something eating at you?"

"I feel tired, Anton. It's Michael. He was gone almost all last week. He showed up Friday for a couple hours, just long enough to shower and change clothes. Then he disappeared again for the weekend. I can't take it any longer."

Please don't be cute and say something bitchy. I can't snub the pain.

"I'm sorry to hear that, Ralph, though I must say that in the two years I've known you, this isn't the first time you've wound up in such a situation."

"True."

"Do the typical thing and throw yourself madly into your work."

And do what with Michael? Tell him to get out? Or just let it linger like before? Even I, believe it or not, have a limit to how much humiliation I can stand.

"Anton, do you have a lover?"

"This week I have five. That's up two from last week, and I haven't had a good night's sleep in over a month. But I'm not complaining."

When they're young, they're immune to any kind of pain. They evade everything important with silliness.

"If you'll work on this cocktail collection for me, Anton, then I'll stay late tonight and set up the Summer Scenes display."

It should be tennis. Cork chips for the court. Silver plastic for a hint of a net. An aluminum ball suspended in mid-air. A small

white table to the side with cool lime drinks awaiting them.

"A deal!" Anton left, whistling some new show tune.

Why is it: if I wore what Anton wears, I'd look like an even bigger fool than I am? And yet he carries it off.

Slowly through the morning, Ralph's beanbag ashtray filled, butts smoked all the way down, filters mutilated by teeth.

The phone rang.

"I know you don't **like** the new mannequins Ralph," Lois of Acquisitions scolded. "But you just can't let them rot in storage. One of the VPs thinks they're the absolute latest and wants them used at the first opportunity."

"They'll be a disaster." They have no personality.

"You'll see, Ralph. Once you use them, you'll be mad for them too. You really shouldn't be such a stick-in-the-mud. After all, what is retailing but keeping up with change. Times do change, and no one's exempt. Not even you."

And then I suppose you'll have me put Ruth, Cheryl, Amanda and all the rest of them in mothballs, probably sell them off to some sleazy discount store in a suburban shopping mall.

The store mannequins were his friends. He shared confidences with them no one else had ever heard. When he dressed them, got just the right wig, struck in just the correct pose, he wasn't only putting together a window display; he was helping ladies—whom he knew and admired—become elegant and desirable. His was a vicarious happiness gained from all the attention they drew. The mannequins in return were more his friends than even his "friends." They never betrayed him.

But now, after years of intimacy, he was

being asked to abandon them, ship them off to some god-awful discount house (who else would buy a lot of used mannequins? And could Amanda, with all her chic, ever think of herself as a **used** mannequin???) to be handled roughly, clad in cheap clothes for the lower classes, fallen from **couture**. They'd get chipped, become neglected, eventually get thrown away. Oh, the ruin of destiny! How the Ms. Fates have it in for us all! How they dictated that even the mannequins should suffer!

But Ralph would suffer more.

Those ghastly new models. They're just black felt forms! No faces—only blobs of shape! How in hell is anyone supposed to feel for them? The tasteless people who run this store. They don't understand a thing!

What Ralph didn't need at this moment in his life was more loss. Imagine no longer seeing Charlene's handsome throat, her upraised chin; imagine no longer having Mandy's elegant profile always there to brighten up any day; imagine no longer having Darlene in wide mid-stride with her refined deb background. They'd make anyone proud to be a woman!

Ralph avoided the employees' cafeteria for lunch. He took a small sketch book with him to a little bar and grille several blocks away. He wanted to be unknown.

It was rare for him to drink at lunch, but today was no ordinary day. Or was it? Collapse seemed imminent, always had; only now was he becoming aware.

It was just one bottle of beer—Ralph alone among the other men used a glass—but it quickly brought on a feeling of mellowness. Ralph felt he could have remained in his little wooden booth forever, be a mannequin himself, a stasis without life but also, more importantly to him, one without pain.

Yet Michael remained.

I'll call the bastard.

He listened to it ring...ring...ring.

"Uh."

"I suppose I got you up."

"Ralph?"

"So you remember me, do you? It's a wonder. I'd like to know where you've been all weekend."

"Been?"

"That's right. In case it's slipped your mind, we're supposed to be having what used to be called a lover relationship."

Remember when I picked him up he told me I used so many big words. He thought I was so smart.

"Hold the line, Ralph. I wanna put on some coffee."

THUNK!

Another humiliation.

Ralph arced the earpiece back into its cradle.

A mannequin has ears but cannot hear She has eyes but cannot see Hands and heart that cannot feel Oh, what a happy state that must be!

When he dressed the windows, the silence was wonderful, like a cooling balm. Distant chatter might waft in from store counters. On the other side of the glass, some people might be yakking away. But in between, Ralph and his mannequins padded their solitude with silence. And in this silence, he felt closer to them—"his girls" he tought of them—closer to their mode of painlessness. Even with their limbs removed, even when they were just naked torsos with heads scattered about in the shop, they kept smiling; they never lost that look of being above it all. This was the quality Ralph so longingly desired to obtain for himself. Then

Michael—all the Michaels of this world—couldn't faze him.

Ralph returned to his work, stopping briefly in his nook, then progressing up to the shop. Here worked the men who supplied him with whatever a fantasy needed. They always seemed active, larger than life, outfitted in jeans or coveralls, implicitly a gang, while he himself felt a loner. He assumed they didn't like him. He expected them to make jokes about him behind his back. And though they always completed the work he instructed them to do, Ralph sensed—and understood that they did too—that actual authority resided with them were they ever to exercise it.

It grew late.

People left.

The store closed.

"Still planning to do the windows by yourself?" Anton was ready to leave. "Because if you want, I can stay and help."

"Thanks. I'll manage."

"Okay. Bye."

Alone, then, with the cleaners and the security guards. No need to seek anonymity when no one's around. Dismantling the old sets. Get Angie out of that floor length rag. It doesn't suit her.

He touched her, pulled off her arm. She didn't flinch. Strange, he could even feel guilty in their presence, even though they were his friends. They knew so much. Once up in the shop, while handling Amanda, who was undraped at the time, Ralph got an erection. He pressed it against her solid thigh. Right there, with other people not even a safe distance away, he rubbed himself against the mannequin and quickly brought himself to climax. When he dressed Mandy now, his eyes would fix on that spot on her thigh, as though aware

of some permanent stain. But like the elegant lady she was, Miss Amanda never mentioned it, never looked accusingly at him when their eyes met. Of course this incident was never repeated; Ralph was still baffled by it.

He scattered sand on the floor. One wicker chaise, a settee in white metal, Lorraine standing to one side of the white chair, her hand on its back, Darlene on the other side, facing away from her. Perhaps a bowl of fruit. No, no fruit. Keep it clean. Fruit would introduce an unnatural contrast.

Besides, live things rot.

Lorraine was in the full-sleeved blouse and the scanty wrap-around skirt. Platform sandals. A wig in short summery hair. Arms out, like a warm welcome from a gracious hostess.

"Do you think Michael will be there when you get home?" he knew she wanted to ask.

"Do you think I can call it home as long as he's there?"

"Will you demand he leave?"

"Oh, he'll leave voluntarily. He's probably got some other arrangement already set up. They usually do."

"Why do you put up with it?"

"It's that or loneliness, and I'm still addicted to companionship whatever way I can get it."

"Men!"

He wired her to the floor. Set.

"Will you go to the bars after work?" he heard her ask.

"That's an idea. It's been a long time, hasn't it?"

"Maybe you'll meet someone."

"Yeah. And start all over again?"

"You'll have to start again sometime."

He completed the display in the first window.

Ralph always felt protective towards the image he created in a window. He was jealous that it should maintain its sanctity; he would let no callous intruder break its precious pose.

He took a breather, sat in the metal chair in the window, a mannequin on each side. He assumed the pose, felt a part of the immutable mis-en-scene. A mother with a small child passed before the window; they stopped. The child stared at Ralph, who wondered: "Does he know? Can he detect that I really don't belong in this picture?"

Or had he passed? **To pass!**...ah! That sent a tingle through him.

But he assumed that even a child could tell. He was certain he could never pass, must always fail. Slowly, he stood up. The child, watching him with swollen eyes, all at once began screaming in horrible fright. The mother gave Ralph a wounding look, picked up her hysterical charge, and hurried away.

Had Michael felt the same?

Ralph walked out of the window display, leaving his footprints in the sand. He couldn't do another window that evening. He'd start early in the morning. It wasn't so bad in the daylight.

Ralph hit a few bars on the way home, ran into some friends. No one else screamed at the sight of him, at least not audibly.

Still, it's a sad idea of a good time.

"Hi, hon!"

"Good to see you!"

"Hey doll, how's Michael? If the cat's away, who knows what a mouse might do."

When Ralph got home, he found out.

Michael had vanished. A quick inventory: Also missing were: Ralph's portable TV, stereo, jewelry, credit cards, an antique pocket watch and whatever loose cash had been in the top drawer.

At least there's no note.

That's what had doubled the hurt previous times. Notes and gratuitous acts of damage, like the time Terry smeared shit over his treasured, autographed Cocteau drawing.

Anton punched into work next morning just in time to help Ralph finish up the last window display.

"Looks great, Ralph." It didn't, of course. Too many depressing browns and stark, hollow whites. The displays did not **invite**. They looked more like illustrations in some psychology text.

"I suppose you broke up with Michael."
"Does it show? Well, just another ending."
Ralph listed for him the items Michael had

removed along with his person.

"Don't get too despondent," Anton said.
"With your 20 per cent employee discount, it shouldn't cost too much to replace everything you lost."

It must be that the future seems so long to them.

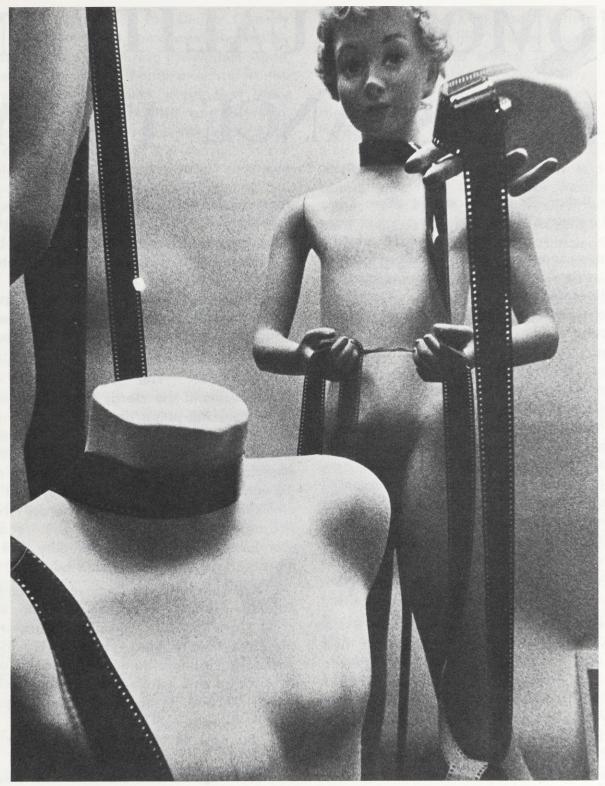
Men in the windows across the street at Jutton's were similarly touching up a new display.

"Wave, Ralph!"

Smiles and greetings were exchanged between the display windows.

Predictably, Anton had his say: "Those dizzy queens haven't one iota of taste. Look at that! They stretch out a pair of pantyhose on a silver coathanger and some clasps and call it a display. What nerve! I think that's pathetic, don't you, Ralph? I mean, there's just no hope for some people. Just downright trashy."

"Trashy," Ralph mumbled. And even though he hadn't been listening to Anton carefully, it was a sentiment with which he could, almost as second nature, agree.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT HOPKINS

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HOMOSEXUALITY IN RENAISSANCE ITALY

Jack Shreve

The Italian Renaissance has often been claimed as one of the great homosexual ages But the homosexuality of the Renaissance seems to have been more a list of famous artists and writers who practiced it than a liberated spirit of the age. Gross appetites and passions "lurked" beneath brilliant social culture, as John Addington Symonds observed, but that they only "lurked" is significant of the reactionary distaste such emotions inspired in the ordinary man. The squeamishness felt toward the "vizio nefando" during the Middle Ages did not seem to change noticeably with the advent of the Renaissance, except that certain enlightened thinkers now began to speculate on how homosexuality could be prevented. Tommaso Campanella, for example, in his Citta del Sole, felt strongly that young men should be freely exposed to the company of young women and that such an education helped foster heterosexual orientation

Renaissance homosexual figures as a whole were not outspoken in defense of their homosexuality. Brunetto Latini, immortalized by Dante as a homosexual, in his own works condemned homosexuality as the basest of sins.1 And Benvenuto Cellini, who comments frequently upon the eye-catching beauty of boys in his autobiography, relates proudly how he denied having had sexual relations with his Page 10

apprentice Cencio, when the boy's mother tried to blackmail him.2 That Renaissance Italians were not as appreciative of masculine beauty as the ancients is clearly demonstrated by another observation made by Cellini. While describing a young man's beauty in glowing terms, he adds, "had he lived in those times, he would have turned their heads still more."3

The Middle Ages were a difficult time for homosexuals. The Church called them sodomites, and the clergy fulminated against them from the pulpit and on parchment (e.g. Alain de Lille's twelfth century treatise, **De Planctu Naturae**). Homosexual practices were especially prevalent in Southern France during the years of the Albigensian heresy, and it was probably in reaction to this heresy that St. Thomas Aquinas made his scathing pronouncement that homosexuality was a sin more serious than incest and adultery.

A discussion of the homosexual element in Medieval literature by the German scholar Ernst Robert Curtius (European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, pp. 113-117) includes passages from four homophiliac poems written by prelates and scholars, and one palinode in which Marbod, Bishop of Rennes, renounces former homosexual practices,

"But now, O winged boy, love's sire, I lock thee out!"

This and the lists of homo- and bisexuals

which Dante gives us in **The Divine Comedy** lead us to suppose that homosexuality was by no means snuffed out during the Middle Ages.

The occurrence of homosexuality in the Latin humanistic comedies, plays that were enacted between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, attests further to the incidence of the "vice" among members of the clergy. In the scandalous Janus Sacerdos, a priest attempts to seduce a young man in the confessional, and a group of the young man's friends seize hold of the priest and force him to swear he will abandon his vicious habit. Another Latin playlet, the Comedia de Falso Ypocrita, is a similar story about a homosexual priest. Boccaccio, too, links actual and suspected homosexuality with the clergy.

How does the great usher of Renaissance thought, Dante, regard homosexuality? While it is true that homosexuals are condemned to walk eternally beneath pellets of fire in Hell (Canto XV), they are neither considered the most guilty of the guilty nor do they receive the worst punishment. For Dante, sodomites are less guilty than those who blaspheme; while the latter show violence against God Himself, the violence of the former is only exercised against one of God's possessions, nature. He does not present them as infamous or deprayed men, but allows them the dignity of portrayal as accomplished people who happen to be afflicted by the same propensity for sin: "They were all clerks and men of such education," he says, "and with great reputations" (11. 106-107). We recognize many of them: Brunetto Latini, Dante's beloved teacher, Priscian, the sixth century Latin grammarian, Francesco d'Accorso, a thirteenth century jurist of Bologna, etc.

Bisexual homosexuals, whose orientation Dante styles as "hermaphroditic," are placed in Purgatory (Canto XXVI), and it is here that we find troubadours like Guido Guinizelli and Arnaut Daniel, and where Julius Caesar is mentioned. These transgressors are in Purgatory undergoing the difficult purification through which finally they will achieve Paradise, and are completely on a par with lustful heterosexuals.

Boccaccio in his **Decameron** is far less sympathetic than Dante. He mentions the subject in only five of the hundred tales, and nearly always in an explicitly negative context, as for example, when it is a suspected or wellestablished attribute of corrupt priests (I, 2; II, 3). In the first tale of the entire work, the villain Ciappelletto is further painted as a sodomite as an accessory characteristic of his thoroughgoing villainy.

More than Ciappelletto, however, Boccaccio's masterpiece of the homosexual antihero is the tale of Pietro di Vinciolo (V, 10). Pietro, who is typically from Perugia and who wants to disguise what everyone already knows about him, marries a highly-sexed young red-head, who would rather have married two husbands than one. Inevitably she takes a lover, and the young man of her choice happens to be one already familiar to Pietro's street prowling. So when Pietro catches the two of them together, he is delighted to have the young man in his clutches, and sodomizes him in pseudo-revenge for his transgression. Boccaccio expected his mainly female audience to howl with laughter over this outcome.

Boccaccio borrowed the details of the tale from **The Golden Ass** of Apuleius, and a comparison of the two versions reveals some points of dissimilarity as to how Roman and Renaissance Italy viewed homosexuality. In the first place, Lucius, the golden ass and narrator of the novel, is sympathetic with the

cuckolded husband, while the sympathy of Boccaccio lies definitely with the cruelly deprived young wife. And for Lucius, the action of the homosexual revenge is more casual and incidental, and it is not depended upon to clench the comic effect of the tale.

The greater liberation of Renaissance women is reflected in their more vocal disapproval of male homosexuality, which provides another contrast to Greek and Roman society (keep in mind Plutarch's dialogue Erotikos, where Ismenodora finds her attraction for Bacchon strengthened by seeing him as the object of the courtship of other men). Pietro di Vinciolo, for instance, is openly berated by his wife for his neglect of her, and Cellini in his Autobiography comments upon the "gibing words" that are commonly addressed by women to young men of eminent beauty who may be potential competitors.4

The association of homosexual practices with priests continued throughout the Renaissance, as we see from the poetry of Francesco Berni and Pietro Aretino, contemporaries of the early sixteenth century. The latter, in fact, uses the motif of the "secret sin" of the monasteries to preface a homosexual seduction of his own in one of his sonnets.

The bulk of Aretino's sonnets, however, are heterosexual in nature, and in one he consigns sodomy to those males who are underdeveloped:

Let him who hath it small play sodomite. But one like mine, both pitiless and proud, Should never leave the female nest of joy."5

Other poets occasionally published works more favorable to the practice, but usually anonymously, such as Giovanni della Casa's In Laudem Sodomiae.

Homosexuality was still punishable by Page 12

death in the Renaissance. In the time of Aretino, an offender might be hanged from a cage suspended from a campanile and left there to die slowly under a shower of rubbish hurled at him by the citizens below.6

Similarly, when the subject appears in literature, the offender is frequently punished. An example of such nemesis is seen in Poliziano's lyric masterpiece Orfeo (1471), which because of its musical accompaniment, has often been called the first libretto. Orfeo. aggrieved by the death of his beloved Euridice. vows to renounce the love of women forever. Unexpectedly, he goes on to praise the "better sex," and we realize that the speech, more than a renunciation, is an out-and-out flip-flop over to the other side of the sexual spectrum, where the love of males is, in the translation of John Addington Symonds, "sweetest, softest, best." After invoking the names of youths beloved by gods, he is interrupted by an indignant Baccante, who invites the other Baccantes to slay Orfeo for his declaration. Thus no sooner is the vow of male love made than the speaker's death is called for and had.

A play where homosexuality is not punished, but is the subject of a practical joke is Aretino's Horse-doctor (1533). The horsedoctor is an established woman-hater and homosexual, and the Duke of Mantua who wants to play a trick on him, decrees that he is to be married. Quaking with fear, the horsedoctor is somehow forced to appear at the wedding, where he discovers, to the great amusement of the crowd, that the "bride" is a boy. Realizing this, the horse-doctor says, "it is better that I hear your laughter over a lie, than my own crying over the truth." But there is no beating of the transvestite (as there is in Machiavelli's play, Clizia) nor is the death of the sexually offending protagonist called for.

The characters at least are left with the chance of a happy life together.

The sonnets of Michelangelo in the early sixteenth century are probably the most open and the most lyrical of Renaissance male love poetry. Because they are so well-known and readily available, I will limit myself here to one quotation, inspired by Tommaso Cavalieri:

"What I desire, what I learn from the beauty

of your face, cannot be understood by ordinary men.

He who wishes to understand it must first die."

That homosexuality was prevalent during the time of the Italian Renaissance is obvious

from the numerous references made to it in the literature of the period. But few of the references are either openly subjective or sympathetic—Michelangelo's sonnets being perhaps the most open declaration of male love made during the entire period. It is an age that invites comparison more properly perhaps with our own than with the ancient Greek and Roman traditions of homophilia. While the Greek quest for male beauty and inspiration was a cultural consensus, and the Roman quest for nomosexual gratification nearly such, both Renaissance and modern homosexuality, on the other hand, have felt the constant and sometimes vicious disapproval of the bulk of the society.

NOTES

- 1. Toynbee, sub Brunetto Latino.
- 2. The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini, p. 329.
- 3. **Ibid.**, 37; the Italian is "gli arebbe fatti piu uscire de' gangheri," literally, "he would have unhinged them."
- 4. **Ibid.**, p. 55.
- 5. James Cleugh, **The Divine Aretino**, p. 70.
- 6. **Ibid**., p. 173.
- 7. Raymond de Becker, **The Other Face of Love**, p. 120.

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RESEARCH

At the start of **Spoon River Anthology**, Edgar Lee Masters asks, "Where are Elmer, Herman, Bert, Tom and Charley, the weak of will, the strong of arm, the clown, the boozer, the fighter?"

At the start of my research on what only the most vicious homophobe could call **Spurned Drivel**, I am interested in the whereabouts of some clowns and boozers who wrote gay or semi-gay novels in the 30s, 40s, and 50s, with the assumption that all are **not** "sleeping on the hill."

Where are, for instance, Edgar Calmer, Frederick Prokosch, Charley Jackson, Calder Willingham, Ward Thomas, Thom Phillips, and Loren Wahl? Anyone know about James Barr, Jay Little, Vin Packer, Gerald Tesch, Lonnie Coleman? Does anyone know anyone who has the address of Charles Henri Ford, James Baldwin, Patrick Dennis, John Rechy, Gore, Truman, and Tennessee? And who in the world was / is "William Talsman"?

Since I'm writing a book on the homosexual novel in America, I would be very much interested in contacting these people to ask them how they think their novels fit into Page 14

any sort of "mainstream" of the genre. I'd also like to hear from publishers, agents (or even readers) who handled the earlier gay novels.

Any leads will be gratefully received by: Roger Austen, 1755 Pine, Number 2, San Francisco, Ca 94109.

REMEMBER OTHERS:

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HARE

By Daniel Curzon

The thousand minor outrages of Joan Cheryl Holmes he bore with equanimity: temper tantrums because he pointed out that Joan's lipstick was smeared or because he would not submit to her on some disagreement about Flaubert, whom she smualy said she was teaching at that very moment in her class; or telling him curtly, "Dean, you have no imagination"; or enveloping him with her coy, oppressive giggles whenever in front of her expentogether sive house in his car—with her husband inside preparing his eighteenth-century seminars—while she imagined that she was committing adultery in going out to movies and concerts with him. It was a sexless adultery, but nonetheless adultery, which Joan fondled in some perverse way, as if she were hoarding excrement with fur and mold on it.

But Dean began to hate her only when she told him that "Auden likes little boys," followed by a sound that must have been a shudder. (Dean couldn't tell since she was at the other end of the line; he could only envision her fringeless, overlarge troll eyes closing in disgust, perhaps her thin arms hugging her collar bones or her flat chest, as flat as a field where even scrub grass won't grow.) Of course Dean couldn't argue with Joan and tell her that W. H. Auden didn't like "little boys," tell her that he had a male lover who was as old as he was, that Joan was as ignorant as any Jehovah's Witness about what homosexuals

were like. He couldn't say these things because she would have asked him, "How do you know so much about the subject?" in her weak-butsly voice, and Dean would not have been allowed to say, "I know because I am one of them."

He had learned too well to be deceptive, to avoid comments that could be used to convict him. He was not prepared to "confess" all to that woman then. There was no talk of gay liberation then. Most people, even educated ones like Joan, who'd read the distortions of Proust and the obliqueness of Gide, didn't know very much about "perverts." And did not want to know anything, preferring to believe instead that W. H. Auden and all of "them" were child-molesters or freaks. "And Paul Goodman has admitted it too," Joan had said. "I'm not going to read either of them anymore!" She did not ask Dean what he thought, though he knew she was probing his mind. But he had a survivor's instinct that made him remain quiet, for he was twenty-five years old, unmarried, and did not date girls, unless the lunches at pancake houses or the long strolls around the University or in nearby parks with Joan herself counted. She had told Dean once that one of her students had said, "Your husband, that bearded, blondish man, is so tall and handsome, Mrs. Holmes. I see you walking around campus with him sometimes." And Joan had snickered because another man—Dean had been taken for her husband. Perhaps she

had her suspicions about what he was, for she was an intelligent woman, if out of touch with the human realities that did not impinge upon her own lumbermill imagination, that is, any type of behavior that could not be processed into one of her endless short stories or novels. If Dean had "no imagination," Joan had too much. She paid too much attention to her own black mind and not enough to fact. Therefore homosexuality seldom crossed her mind. And so when Dean did not defend Auden, even though he rankled inside at the shame and secrecy that muzzled the "perverts," Joan was assured that Dean was "normal," that he was merely a shy young man with whom she could flirt, a man whom she could ask, poutingly, insinuatingly: "Why don't you take me dancing instead of to the play at school? I don't want to be a judge for it anyhow!" All in all, Dean was someone with whom Joan could SIN-in her puritan-enriched mind—and yet not really have to sleep with, although that delightfully forbidden possibility was always lurking between them.

Why he put up with this relationship for so long he could not analyze. Can anyone truly understand his own motivations? All he knew was that his hatred of her increased with every deception, with every insult about "perverts." Until it all exploded, until it flooded them both like lava. . .

In part Dean was flattered that a woman was in love with him. Other women—a tomato-cheeked undergraduate and a brash graduate student—had been infatuated with him. But Joan, though plain, weak-chinned, was obviously a superior woman, a woman with a first-rate brain. Although she had not published even her first book when he met her, there was a decided air of knowledge and promise and

achievement about her. She was going to be Somebody. Who can resist the flattery of being loved by somebody like that, even though Dean had no sexual interest in her, an Olive Oyl woman? Not in any woman. Besides, Joan had taken the initiative and called him: "I need some advice on teaching comedy to my classes. Can you help me?"

"Would you like me to read you my notes over the phone?" he had asked.

Yes, Dean was naive, like Joan herself, because he imagined that a woman could be friends with a man, that Joan would be satisfied with their long discussions—sometimes for hours over the telephone or after movies—and that she would never press the moment to its crisis. He did not understand that she was infatuated with him, not fully. He did not love himself enough to see how anyone else could.

Joan of course did not throw herself at Dean, nothing more provocative than luminous smiles over a salad in the cafeteria. So Dean told himself that Joan just liked his company as an intimate friend, someone interested in literature as much as she was, someone to be intellectual with in the generally sterile, Catholic atmosphere of their university and its Jesuits, with its Eisenhower residue of the 1950's. He felt they were both simply in need because Dean had not come out sexually yet and because Joan's husband was undergoing a psychological upheaval, withdrawing, weeping, avoiding his classes at another university, leaving his wife, who was addicted to the companionship of someone, feeling rootless and alone. And thus they grew closer to each other.

Still even in their closeness their tragedy was growing, like a steel icycle. With every calculated sentence about his sexuality, with every phrase he halted before it escaped his lips, with every fear of being "caught," of hearing Joan say, "You're a what? A what?" Dean's hatred grew.

He found himself respecting her writing, though disliking it too. It was powerful but demented. And she was stealing too much from Faulkner, he thought. The Female Faulkner of the North. Moreover, she was repeating herself shamefully, mechanically, almost as if she did not even look at her own writing to see what it was about, but only transcribed images from a demonic underworld for human beings to view, a Platonic reflection of an Hieronymus Bosch inferno. Joan seemed to use her typewriter as if she were pursued by a battalion of devils and her only escape lay in bombarding them, forcing them back into the scintillating darkness again and again.

For her LOVE was akin to TERROR. (The capitals are not idly used.) She believed that LOVE killed people. (And, oddly enough, she was right, though not exactly the way she thought.) Dean admired her artistic control of her demon. Could anyone fail to be stirred by such sick power, such a fear of what human beings in rage and devotion can do to each other? If one knew Joan through these works or even by noticing the pallid skin and the cortisone hyper-functioning that showed in her frequent heart palpitations—he could not help realizing that here was a remarkable woman, whose lopsided feelings made her unique, a woman whose immense discipline channeled into her art all her unnatural intensity about LOVE, about the self-destructive, egodehydrating connections between males and females that she evidently thought was "normal."

Once, when Dean pointed out to her that most people feel no such avalanches of

yearning for any particular person, such nightmarish, obsessive, catatonic annihilations out of LOVE, at first Joan was surprised, and then she attacked him, as usual, telling him that he needed a woman to teach him what love meant, that he was "so innocent." She meant immature, that somehow he was at fault because he didn't experience her operatic emotions. But Dean didn't give in to her readily, and insisted that the obsessive LOVE of Joan's characters was surely just dramatic heightening. Yet in one crevice of his heart he knew that Joan did experience all that febrile rhapsody, which Dean dismissed too easily as "feminine romantic rubbish." For Joan gave alimpses of her own obsession—writing dozens of short stories week after week about ensnared lovers, writing a seven-hundred-page "popular" novel "just for fun" and then throwing it into her garage, writing new novels, always more novels, trying out her new electric typewriter by creating sixty pages in one sweep, besides teaching full time, reading, going out to luncheons and parties, writing articles and reviews—and seeing Dean.

He felt uneasy sitting across Cokes from her (neither of them drank liquor or even coffee then) because he sensed that there was a laser beam inside Joan's mind, a laser beam of potential psychosis that might sizzle him to nothingness if he got in its way. He wasn't, however, to understand Joan's mind fully until later, when she had stopped LOVING him, and he saw her turn that laser beam in other directions. Then he learned that she had hardly been in love with him at all. Rather, she was, to vary the image a little, like some Neurotic Generator exuding millions of killowats, her energy generated by god knows what precarious harmonies, and switched onto HIGH, and various men, including Dean, ambled or stumbled unawares into the force field called Joan Cheryl Holmes, and as a result were LOVED.

And yet, despite all this sense of obsessive love, all this Lawrentian blabber Dean felt that Joan was shallow in her actual love relationships. For a prime example, he was certain she only tolerated her husband; she did not love him. For Cal did silly, even stupid, things like exit the freeway on the wrong ramp, following other cars sheepishly. Generally Cal was a befogged, solipsistic man, thirty-one then, be-spectacled, a Ph.D., the best-educated retarded person that Dean had ever met.

He gave Joan credit for making the most of the marriage (and respectability) that she craved. She bullied and intimidated Cal as only a brilliant woman who is nevertheless feminine can do, but what alternative did she have if her everyday life was not to be messy and thwarted because of her husband's incompetence and befuddlement. Joan always called him "Honey" and always excused his excessive drinking (two or three double martinis, without batting an already sodden eyelid) whenever he accompanied Joan and Dean to a restaurant, and she would merely exclaim mildly when Cal said something ill-informed or, more likely, paranoid, as though she were reprimanding one of their cats, called Kitty and Fluffy.

Those names themselves were the equivalent of the "Honey" that she called Cal. Kitty, Fluffy, Honey—generic names, not specific ones. Husbands were "Honeys," who did absurd and foolish things, but were put up with because LOVE was required for a woman by that indomitable force known as the World, or Society, or Other People. But Dean could not believe that she loved her husband personally. He was positive that she had snatched at him in Graduate School, where she met him at a tea,

because he was the answer to one of her current needs—a tall, manageable husband. One got an M.A., a teaching position, a tall husband, and then later a host of books. That was life. She—Dean was equally sure—had convinced herself that she was in Love (even Fiercely) with Cal, and she was simply willing to trade occasional sex (which evidently bored her, to judge from the inert sexual postures of her heroines) for the redemption of Not Being an Old Maid. Joan feared what her sorority sisters in undergraduate school had predicted: "She'll never get a man, being a writer with all those A's and all that!" But she showed them! She was class valedictorian AND she got a presentable husband too. Even before they did! At least Cal was presentable to all appearance (what mattered most to her), a man who would not interfere with her goals, her whims, someone to fix leaky sinks and to mow the lawn, to be petted on the head, like Kitty and Fluffy, not personally, but to satisfy the stroking instinct.

Dean began to learn of Joan's freakish capacity for convincing herself that she was in the throes of multidimensional passions. He saw her flirt with other men even when with him. Later, when she had turned aside from Dean, he watched her go on to commit "adultery" with a string of tepid men, each one the Ultimate to her at the moment. He wanted to believe that her intelligence triumphed over her feelings as these barren "adulteries" became commonplace for her and that she realized how she fabricated the notion of LOVE to justify her wayward, "spicy" fornication. (Her superego was tyrannical.) With Dean, however, she couldn't do that, because he was her first extra-marital "affair," and hence she didn't evaluate it clearly.

He imagined that he could avoid this Evil

Temptress side of her because she was so prudish she wouldn't even use swear words or talk about bodily functions. Thus he doubted that she would throw herself into his bed. One time in her house—Cal was not in the room—they were talking, and Dean explored her mind:

"Sometimes people (Dean meant her of course) act differently in bed from the way they do in public. Repressed people, I've heard, really abandon themselves during sex."

Her reply was: "I think people are pretty much the same wherever they are."

And so Dean had suspected that Joan was an Iron Vagina, possibly frigid, or so "feminine" as to hover on the masochistic, enduring sexual penetration like an ice pick even as she feverishly sought LOVE. At those times when she tried to massage Dean's neck or take his arm in a windburst he always jerked free, nervous, fearing that physical contact would lead to something that would crumple their relationship forever. Disastrously, however, Dean was enticing Joan more, because she became intrigued with what she couldn't get, even thought he was "frigid." Certainly he counted on her prim, schoolmarm restraint that made her scold him if he let fall a "Fuck off!" at a careless driver.

Prissily she would twist her head away to the car window, so that he could see her long, out-of-style dark hair only from the back, and then she'd tense her body or almost sob, to let him know that he had insulted her.

"You don't respect me! You **must** respect me!" she would argue. "You can't take me for granted. Nobody can!"

"I respect you!" Dean would plead, grasping the steering wheel, chagrined and unsettled by her grim prudishness.

Why wouldn't Dean have thought that

Joan's stringent inhibitions would protect them both from an embarrassing scene. The thought that everything was leading them to a tragedy barely passed through his mind.

Anyone would have thought that Joan would never risk her self-esteem by dragging a spurious "manhood" out of Dean—meaning fucking her—even though she often teased him like this: "Any man would take advantage of any woman if he got the chance." She always grinned as she said the words.

He relied on preserving their "friendship" in tact—virgo intactus—by keeping their long discussions, two and three times a week, "philosophical" and as much as possible away from anything that could corrupt its purity.

Once Joan said, "Cal might shoot you, you know, for taking me out." With a sham laugh.

"One of the ironies of life," Dean replied, then changed the subject so that she'd remember that he and she were only brother and sister in their chaste connection.

There was some guile in Dean, to complicate the relationship. In the rear of his mind lay the granule of the idea that Joan might be an aid for getting him into Literature. He hadn't published anything except one critical article then, and yet he passionately wanted to be in the pantheon of literary saints—a Writer. Somebody like Hemingway. A Real Writer, not a dabbler. Someone whose work Mattered, was Discussed, Analyzed (even though Dean thought Hemingway himself a latent cocksucker, a barbarian who killed animals instead of sucking the men he desired deep down inside his red-blooded, all-American aonads). Dean did not want to die unnoticed. unremarked, unremembered. He knew that he would never have any offspring, that his only hope for immortality or significance lay in his

writing. He would not have cared so torrentially, so destructively if he hadn't felt like a leper—a despicable QUEER. A year or two later, when Joan was beginning to be hailed as a writer to watch, Dean had visions of the two of them climbing up the Ladder of Art hand in hand. He didn't know then how selfish she was, how she thought nothing of pushing him off the Ladder and watching the Man Who Had Not Loved Her shatter on the sharks below.

Joan secretly did not like Dean's writing very much. He showed her some of his early plays (all useless) and stories (also worthless, because he couldn't in those days write freely about the one subject that really mattered to him—homosexuality). It was obvious even to him that she had to search for praise, and consequently wound up insulting him, saying, "I don't understand why you aren't getting published, Dean. I see just awful things being published all the time." Naturally he resented her greatly (though not enough to provoke their tragedy yet), for he did not much care for Joan's earlier works, which she gave him to read in manuscript (always about hysterical girls abused by middle-aged race drivers, or demented suburban housewives destroying their children). And yet Dean rarely criticized them, although he thought they were written too fast, without enough revision. Indeed he lauded them, knowing Joan wanted commendation, saving only an occasional grudgment so that his criticism would not seem bland. He told her how good those fetid, overripe stories and early novels were, and she drew nourishment from the congratulations and went on to write better and better ones. Dean over-praised her accomplishment; yet she could barely manufacture a soothing lie for his.

Not because they were so far apart in talent. He knew that his works were immature, but he also knew that he had something valuable and unique to say—about gay people and the destructiveness of the laws and attitudes against them, about the self-hatred they were forced to wallow in. Dean simply wanted Joan to lie to him the way he lied to her.

He didn't even consider showing her his work about "queers," afraid of hatred, as all homosexuals were then. Just before everything exploded finally, Dean would sit with these manuscripts in his fists, pushing on his throbbing eyes, thinking, Goddamn her! I've earned something from this woman! I've earned it slowly and in thousands of pieces over these nine years. Nine years of her! Joan owes me something. Goddamn her! She owes me! She made me beg her for a lousy favor! Why didn't she give it to me? She should never have made me beg her for a favor! The stingy bitch! She should be dead!"

He was thinking of times like the day he comforted her when her first play was demolished by the New York critics. With her eyes puffy, undershadowed, she sat downcast and abject in a cheap restaurant across from the University, saying, "You probably don't want to sit with me, after this."

"I like you for yourself, not for a play in New York." He smiled.

What he'd said was true. In fact, he wondered if he didn't like her best of all at that moment of defeat. For all they both knew it could have been the end of her career. How she warmed to Dean's words, eager, puppy-like. But it was the shame of this gratitude and others like it that became the weight of her hatred of him, that permitted Joan to hurt him

so devastatingly later on. Their intimacies accumulated into ponderous, unforgiveable debts that they both had to discharge somehow.

Dean wanted to tell her of his own artistic ambitions, but he kept them inside. He didn't tell her his longings because he didn't want pity. Nor did he have dozens of stories and a half-dozen novels behind him, as Joan did already. Where was the proof? He feared that he was not as gifted as she was; he felt himself floundering around, experimenting, yet he sensed that he would ripen. Joan, a female, had matured first (three months younger than Dean) and was blossoming like a fully grown tree at twenty-six. His time would come.

What he didn't know was that Joan had labeled him as another "failed writer." Unbeknownst to herself, she fell in love with that type of man regularly. That is, she selected men like her husband and Everett, the LOVER who followed Dean, because they were inept at writing. Or minor. They kept trying to get into print and had to settle for The Fargo Review or Blunderbuss, a Journal of the Arts because their talents were miniscule. Joan felt a rivalry with men, with other writers, however little she talked about actual writing. Secretly, savagely, she wanted to be superior at any cost and hence picked men moderately, respectably successful—with a couple of poems or even a book of poems put out by a midget press—but who would never succeed as Joan Cheryl Holmes was beginning to succeed already.

The fall when the Artists Studio produced her first play, Dean drove her to New York (she wouldn't fly; her husband didn't want to go) for a few rehearsals. Even then she was lionized, taken around by her agent (a cruel woman entrenched in literary circles) to luncheons

with editors and Joan's publisher, with Dean tagging along, called "Hey" or something else by others who, he supposed, were used to hangers-on. The editors actually apologized to Joan because they couldn't take her stories. (Women's magazines were still printing nothing but things like "Twenty-seven Exciting Ways to Use Catsup.") But they knew that she was Somebody, even beneath mousiness she affected as a mask to protect herself from Other People. She was going to be important in literature; she was going to rocket to the top with the likes of Norman Mailer and Saul Bellow, with hardly a hitch in the ascent. And it looked as if Dean were never going to be higher than Bog, a Newsletter of the Nobodies, just another would-be, a wimp.

But meanwhile Dean was shaping himself within, yearning for the liberality of the times that would allow homosexuality to be written about as he wanted to: directly, no longer in riddles, powerfully, without sentimentality. And so he worked away at his manuscripts, the only place where he could be completely free and honest.

Joan's reviews began to mount in significance, appearing in **The New York Times** and **Newsweek**. Then **Cosmopolitan** and other major magazines began to take her work. (She telephoned Dean breathlessly when the first thousand-dollar check arrived, or when she won a Guggenheim Fellowship. Dean was rejected when he applied, three years in a row.)

Dean felt happy for Joan; yet his joy was mixed with envy. He fought it, but he indeed felt so much frustration that he finally had his first homosexual experience on the very night of the day that Joan had two more stories accepted and he had two of his returned

without so much as a rejection slip. He went out, twenty-six years old, to a wooded park and cruised until he found somebody, his heart rattling with anxiety lest the man be a Vice officer (that was to come a year later) and kissed a man and sucked his cock and committed himself to what most people consider (even now) a life of depravity, though once there he was angry for waiting so long.

He read the interviews with Joan that began to appear, sparse with close-mouthed, vapid remarks that the interviewers had to pry out of her. They took her reticence for lack of ego, but Dean knew that Joan's ego was so strong she erected barbed-wire defenses to keep people away. He held one magazine in his hands, shaking his head at the image that came through: "Mrs. Holmes says she is merely a conventional woman who happens to write. She says she is living a life that is a study in conventionality." Dean smirked at the biodegradable information that Joan was giving out. "You dissembling, adulterous wretch. You would-be adulteress! You're afraid of the interviewers, afraid they'll see into your real mind, into the festering imagination. Why won't you discuss the stories you write—about a girl forcing menstrual blood down her leg during a visit to a seminary, about lovers finding baby skeletons in graveyards, about an intern eating a cadaver's cervix, about a student choking to death on his own vomit in a drunken stupor!" He dropped the magazine on the floor, startled to realize how much he resented her.

He promoted her work, mentioning her books in his classes, telling his friends and colleagues. He even appeared on a radio program sponsored by the University to discuss "this up-and-coming young writer." He was the only member of the radio panel who had read

her stories. The others faked it. Such promotion of her writing he gave as a new friend, not because he thought her first books were so special, just as he drove her to supermarkets and accompanied her to lectures at the Faculty Club or tried to soothe over the disconcerting spats that Joan and her husband had in Dean's presence, in their new house, a big, prosperous house with five bedrooms. Dean fed Kitty and Fluffy and watched the house when Joan and Cal went away to New England in the summer of 1967, the summer that the Race Riot broke out. Joan called him, frightened—Dean thought it was a child calling long-distance prank—asking, "Has our house been burned down?" He assured her it was safe, for he had gone to see, riding through the panicked streets of the race-rotted city to check on her home. He did it as a friend, expecting no more than returned friendship. Dean thought it extremely clever of Joan that she won the Presidential Fiction Award two years later for her novel that culminated in the Riot. Joan had not even been there! Her detailed descriptions of the killings, the fires, the hordes of rats fleeing the city's ghettoes were all culled from newspaper reports. She had been vacationing in New Hampshire when the streets were purple with blood.

He even considered it clever of her that she had taken the story of one of **his** students, a black girl who had been raped and then gone into a period where she lived like an animal, growing obese and bestial in her bedroom, and transformed it into a novel. He had hopes that Joan would dedicate the novel to him, since she had gotten the germ of it from him and from the tour of the ugly East Side of the city, where Dean had grown up, on which he took Joan. Instead she dedicated it to her husband (who

did not even read most of her writing—she wouldn't let him, lest he discover the rotten parts of her brain). Dean did not mention the possible dedication, and was basically pleased that Joan had been able to profit from his story and make everyone believe that her heroine had really been Joan's student—and then had actually won a major literary award for it. With such a gift for fabrication Dean was amazed. That's why he was not as picky as some of the critics or his friends, who faulted the book in many ways. No, he was awed by the thrust of Joan's Gothic cathedral structures, rising out of her smoking mind, with no help from anything but her reading and her brain. She never watched television, never listened to radio programs; she kept herself aloof from such mundane entertainments, and it seemed to Dean that, for any accuracy of detail that she thereby lost, she gained in originality of insight. No doubt he was blinded by her, identifying with her, wishing to soar into the literary empyrean too. He was proud to be associated with her, though few people had heard of her then, only some critics in New York. Dean wished her well, nothing but the best.

He himself was working on a novel—in Vietnam and Okinawa, where he had gone to teach (his previous instructoruhip used up) for a third-rate university on military bases since he couldn't get a job elsewhere in the academic world. He hoped that his book would be published too.

And several years later it was published! At last! At last! Without Joan's aid, without so much as a crumb in the midst of her plenty. Except (yes, even this) that he had gotten the literary agent, who sold the novel, through Joan. At first the agent (the cruel woman) had returned his work to him. But he had persisted,

finally sending her his pain-and-anger-filled novel about the dismemberment of the homosexual, by society, by self-loathing, about the destruction of lives by the Vice Squad because men had sex together, about men actually paid to go out and entrap men for having sex in the dark. And the book was accepted! Accepted by a major publisher, partly because a trashy novel about a "happy gay marriage" had sold fifty thousand copies the year before. At last Dean was getting into print, making it! He knew that he had something to say, something important, much more original than anything Joan was writing. He would dramatize for the world what it was doing, had been doing for centuries, to the Misfits, the Deviates, the Queers, the abused sexual minority. He would make readers feel the pain, as he had felt it when he had been arrested by a plainclothes policeman in a park and humiliated and harassed, harangued and contemned by policemen, bondsmen, lawyers, police psychiatrists, convicted by the whole erotophobic Inquisition with its medieval tortures. He would make his readers gasp and cry and grow furious with indignation, not by propagandizing, but by showing the stark reality—if they would only read what he had written, if the world would only overcome its gut-constricting disgust and its deafness to the need of men to touch each other's bodies—that "filth," that retch-making hideousness that most straights could entertain for no longer than a tabooless moment or two. Even people liberal in every other way were ready to assail and denigrate and castrate the QUEERS! Well, Dean was not a failure as a writer any longer. He could hold his head up with the Real Writers, like Joan Cheryl Holmes.

And what was Joan's reaction? She had read the manuscript of the novel and

congratulated Dean. But it was a chilled congratulations. He knew that the book disturbed her, for it contained her as a character, her weaker, "nicer" side, the suffocating "normal" side of her. In her Woman's Heart Joan cringed at what the book revealed. It pained her deep within where women live in harmony with the Great Procuress, Mother Nature. Joan, a Woman, had loved a Queer! Somehow her vibrations had been wrong. She had loved a man who had never wanted to fuck her! Not that Joan wanted to fuck. The word is everything. She wanted to Make Love, to Be in Love. Not that Joan with her ambitious, muscular mind wanted to have a baby, wanted to explode with swollen belly and breasts and drop a burden into a cradle. Never that! The thought actually distressed and appalled her, for a baby would make her into an animal, a autter. Yet within the bible of her loins there was a demand that any male that she had LOVEDmust have wanted to stab her with his organ, to have shot his truth into the clinging recesses of her womb,—even though Joan had craftily protected herself with contraceptive guardians to prevent the seed from sprouting. Joan couldn't even read Dean's descriptions of male sex without lifting her eyes from the page, without skimming what told her what a FOOL she had been, how unintelligent for all her 157 IQ, how defective and obtuse of her! Oh yes, she was disturbed by what Dean had written in the frustrated loneliness and semidespair of Vietnam, unable to be himself in the bleak military environment, terrified of discovery, of being fired, of being prosecuted for being a "Misfit," a "Degenerate," a "Sissy-Man," a "Deviate!" What else could she feel but a mixture of pities for Dean, pities and hate? He had hacked his spit into her Woman's Womb; he had paid her the ultimate insult—not Page 24

wanting to fuck her!

And they both knew this then, though neither fully formed the thought in their heads. But Dean sensed that he would have to hate her too, would have to deflect her hatred of him with a hatred equal—or perhaps stronger. He could already feel her killing him, with her varieties of pity, with her silences. Once she flicked her shoulder, when he saw her again, a snippy, clipped removal of her tailored shoulder from his hand which held her coat to let Dean know that he did not matter anymore, that he was not a MAN, even though Joan was too prissy, too cowardly to scream the words at him, even to terminate their "friendship." She was too self-serving ever to risk having someone injure her, letting someone destroy her the way she made demented forces destroy the women in her fiction, all those catastrophic horrors that Joan marshalled as her armies or built into fortresses or art, to stand between her and the world she knew to be seething with devastation. No, she would never reject the Queer full-faced; she would only smoke him out with her muted contempt. Later she would put him into one of her novels as a sinister creep of a doctor who has "designs" on the hero of the book. She would write a scene where the creep wants to spill toads of confession upon a table, to spew slimey lizards about his "secret acts" before the disgusted hero (Joan herself in one of her disguises). All this because Dean had told her: "I want to speak freely about my life."

"It's vulgar. I don't want to hear," she wrote him.

A writer supposedly open to all experiences, Joan would not let Dean tell her the slightest detail about that other self, preferring to hear nothing at all rather than to be reminded of her folly in wanting him! She did not even see the paradox of her rejection of Dean's life all the while she was thrilling to her own bubbling fantasies about Rapist-Lovers. She simply assumed that hers were better because they were about men and women.

Joan was fully in tune with society, making Dean defend himself for being, making him want to be "normal," making him cry as he masturbated in his bathroom rather than find a man and demonstrate to himself that he was one of the defective, the perverted, the outcast! Joan of course never railed at him. But there was an Old Testament Prophet in her every aspect, telling him—roaring at him—that he was of Sodom, of the damned, of the sick. One of the Sick. She accepted the smug, archaic judgment of society, just as most people do even now—even now—that her sterile. childless sexual relations with her husband. and later with Everett, were superior to Dean's, weren't even on the same plane of existence, in the same solar system, reducing him to abjectness, to craving for acceptance, for a kind gob of tolerance. Don't snicker at me, Dean thought. Don't pity me! Stop making me feel like a "nigger." No, worse than that. Blacks can feel that it's prejudice that's crucifying them, while queers can only feel that we deserve no more than charity—not justice because we're "unnatural." "inferior." She makes me want to fawn on her, then to scrape her eyeballs out, to lick her knees for mercy, then to jab a ballpoint pen into her skinny neck—because she's such an orthodox, enslaving sexual fascist!

Joan was a symbol of Mind, of Education, everything that literature stands for, and she was a sexual fascist, a heterosexual Nazi! Dean felt that he could never justify himself even if allowed to "speak freely," no matter

how many novels he might write, not if he filled a hundred garbage dumps with them (what they deserved naturally), that however violently he argued himself into reasons why he was as worthwhile in the Great Chain of Being as the straights, he would never really be. For he was a QUEER. He could rationalize his usefulness by pasting billboards with statistics about the population explosion until Doomsday and still be nothing but a bacterium, a distorted, not-even-interesting amoeba sniveling why it shouldn't be burned up with a match. Dean could see Joan disentangling her romantic feelings for him, slowly, one by one, like someone picking lice out of her hair.

He waited with trembling patience for the reviews of his novel to appear, victim of reviewers' moods, the temper of the time. And some of them were splendid: "A stunning masterpiece," "the most compelling gay novel ever written," "a masterpiece of power!" He wondered if they'd been written by other homosexuals. (Were they biased or were they the only people who could appreciate the rage and despair of his book?) But there were no reviews in the big places, like TIME or ESQUIRE or THE NEW YORK TIMES—the single most important place. He had gone to London, writing full time then, living on his meager savings from his teaching in Asia, proud and happy at being a Real Writer, even when some reviewers attacked his book for being too militant, for being sexually offensive. He knew that was part of the price. He knew that the book was ahead of them morally, more enlightened, more humane, and that in time the book might become a classic, might be read by most educated persons, maybe be taught in university classes.

But it wasn't selling. He had never wanted a "best-seller," but it wasn't even making back

the advance that the publisher had given him though he didn't know that then. Dean was confidently into a new novel, a comedy, wanting to show the funnier side of gay life, typing rapturously every day, living frugally, writing to Joan about "the happiest time of my life." And from her there came no word at all about promoting his novel, although he had promoted hers: not in the column that she wrote for a metropolitan newspaper, not even on the book page of the paper, for which she wrote weekly reviews, reviews churned out sometimes without even reading the books. Dean would have been overjoyed with a mere review in the useless local newspaper, in his hometown's newspaper. For the paper—out of suppression of the subject—had not mentioned the book. The book takes place in that very city and portrays its Vice Squad and yet this "family" newspaper refused to mention it although Dean wrote letters calling the editors' attention to it, wanting others besides homosexuals to read it, then writing to Playboy and Harper's, to every major magazine or paper. "No room for reviews," Dean was told. Room for Jacqueline Susann or Harold Robbins, though. Joan said not a word about helping him, and Dean understood, in part, for he appreciated her fear of being "used" by people. So he did not push it, although writers have always asked their friends to help them. Yet Dean didn't ask Joan directly in his letters, hoping, trusting in her generosity. He should have hoped for starlight from a cesspool first.

And then his life started to fall apart, after he had imagined that at last he was set for life as a writer. He'd believed he'd be producing a novel or collection of stories every year or two, moving into the mainstream, reshaping opinions. But his editor didn't think the gay

comic novel Dean sent him was commercial enough. The rejection stung, but Dean could live with it, thinking that it was too avantgard in style for a regular publisher, or possibly that the book was a failure. Even Joan Cheryl Holmes, after all, had written books that her publisher had refused. Dean could take the hurt like an adult, like a "man," as they say. So he set to work totally revising an earlier unpublished novel, rebuilding it into something bigger and more coherent. He sat hunched over the typewriter, day in and day out, listening to the keys, trying to unravel problems, trying to exhilarate and engage the reader, trying to dramatize the fact that homosexuals who ape bourgeoise twosomes in order to justify their love-making are headed for pain. Dean sweated through four hundred and sixty-five pages, as his savings were running out and he was finding it impossible to secure a teaching job in London, or in the States either. He sent out a hundred applications, each typed individually, and no school offered so much as an interview. The job market was closed, closed doubly to "queers (his pen name and the title made him look suspicious to many hiring committees). But Dean typed on, knowing that the book was as good as his published one, and hoping that it might sell better.

But his editor hated the book and did not even finish reading it, and wrote Dean a heartless rejection. And so, there Dean was, benumbed in his grief, trying to stand upright under the pressure, the humiliation, trying not to be too bitter and accuse the editor of rejecting it so **cruelly** because Dean's first book had not sold enough. He took comfort from the paperback sale and the translations into French and Dutch of his first novel. The little bits of cash, though they came months late, helped

Dean to stay in London, to pay his rent, and to begin a brand new novel.

He was also comforted by the fact that Joan and her husband were coming to London for a sabbatical leave; they would pick up where they'd left off two years before: dinners, conversations, museums, rambles. Dean wouldn't whine and whimper about his troubles, because he knew that no one can stand self-pity. People prize Noble Suffering in others because it saves them from having to listen to them. He realized that self-pity, not sex, is the great taboo! He did not complain to the editor that he'd been treated like someone who'd sent in a manuscript scribbled on brown paper bags or that the publisher had done almost nothing to promote the first book, had discouraged Dean from doing publicity, even though he'd been willing to face hostility. Dean didn't cry because Joan was coming to London, and he would have an intimate friend again, someone to laugh with.

He cried only when his dog got killed by a car, when the small Norfolk Terrier, named Toddy, ran into the street when Dean was loading his car to move to a cheaper flat, and its lungs were crushed, gasping till it died in the veterinarian's office. Dean wept for weeks, crawling up the staircase of his new flat, alone, ashamed of himself for being so "pathetic," so dependent on a dog's love, the only thing he had to love, crying over his typewriter as he began another book, feeling lines start to hack at his face, his beard greying, as middle age and death began. Determined, even fanatical, not knowing what else to believe in unless it was his own determination, his own dignity.

Then Joan and her husband arrived. When she called Dean, he went to visit them in their Mayfair flat overlooking Hyde Park and they

had a spirited time, just like in the old days. Joan was prettier, her hair more fashionable: cut short and pulled back, with spikes of spitcurls at the earlobes. A senorita. Her make-up was more professional too, more eyeliner, even false eyelashes. A portrait of a Major Writer who was making money besides. Lots and lots of money, from royalties, anthology rights, book club rights, movie rights, a Successful Woman who complained that now she had to pay taxes—"just awful amounts, Dean!" four times a year, that she was supporting fifty welfare families with her taxes. When she asked Dean how he was doing, he didn't tell her that he was thinking of applying for public assistance. He simply smiled and said, "I have some."

"Will that be enough to last while I'm here?" she asked.

"I think so," he replied.

"Oh, good! I don't care what happens to you after that!" Said gaily, frivolously.

A reader wouldn't guess it from her smouldering, wrathful, fulminating writing, but Joan had quite a sense of humor. "I don't care what happens to you after that." Dean held the words in his hands like stones. He grinned, not telling her that he was worried sick that he wouldn't be able to pay his rent for the whole year. One does not burden one's friends with mournful tales of need. It's bad taste. Better to starve quietly. That's good taste.

Of course Dean would never have dreamed of asking Joan for money, not one cent. Even though she and Cal had shipped their Mercedes-Benz across the Atlantic for their year abroad, even though she and Cal were paying fifty pounds per week for their flat in Mayfair, even though she had \$300,000 in the bank then, he wouldn't have asked her

because he knew that she was selfish about money. She had always made him leave the tips in restaurants—because "a man likes to pay." A trivial detail—and yet it was the trivial details, the microscopic insults and humiliations (as well as the major one that led to the tragedy) that made Dean shake with rage.

He asked her for nothing that night, but Joan told him that she was going to dedicate her next collection of short stories to him. So on the strength of the warmth he sensed in their renewed friendship and the inscription to him that Joan wrote on her latest novel: "with admiration for your talent and gratitude for our friendship," Dean sat down at his typewriter with trepidation certainly—and wrote Joan a letter, not wanting to face her eye-to-eye across a luncheon table and wrest a favor from her, however emphatically he required it. Instead he would write her an expressive letter asking her openly, at last forthrightly, if she would do him, as a friend, a favor—would she write him a review for The New York Times Book Review, for which she had written several times? Six months had passed since Dean's novel had appeared, and a review might not affect sales greatly, but it might get the novel some critical attention and stir some ripples—that is, if the Great Joan Cheryl Holmes said some enthusiastic words. He made clear that the review didn't have to be a fake rave, merely a hand-up, something to save Dean from having to leave London and go back to the teaching job in Asia, which he despised, if he could even get that awful job in the homophobic military environment again, which was doubtful.

Her answering letter came a couple of days later. It said: "You have obliterated our

friendship." It said many things, but the most memorable to Dean was: "Nobudy helped me with my first book." Nobody helped her with her first book. Generous woman, lavish in your beneficence, he thought. Joan was sitting on top of the world, esteemed, growing famous, wealthy, fecund in imagination, even grown attractive in her success, even her husband healthier-minded, writing to a nine-year-long friend that she was profoundly hurt because he wanted to "use" her. She had "used" Dean for years, romantically, emotionally, and now she felt betrayed because he was asking for help.

Unfortunately Dean, in his desperation, had not been wise. He had made the error of mentioning a couple of the favors that he'd done for Joan. The idea that they were trading favors upset her romantic mind. Anyone else would have considered this a faux pas, a bad mistake perhaps, but not carte blanche to disembowel him. "But you're not working. You don't have a job!" she wrote. Dean was writing all the time, and Joan was acting like some Oklahoman, sweat-jowled sheriff because he had no regular job! Never mind that the academic marketplace was not hiring, that he had to hide some of his publications because they were in "queer" magazines. He was not working, only writing fiction! And Joan a writer! "Nobody helped me wilh my first book."

Dean wrote back at once, apologizing, sure that she had misunderstood his petition, telling her gently that he didn't want to quarrel with her, that he'd resorted to this "drastic" measure only because he saw no other way to get reviewed, to have a chance to write more novels on a magnificent, but suppressed, theme.

Joan's answer came back a few days after

Unopened. On the back she had scribbled, "I have agonized over this for many minutes, but I have decided to return your letter unopened." Dean stood with the letter shaking in his hands. Many minutes! Many minutes—how delightfully cruel she was! He couldn't believe her hatred of him. She had done the same thing to an earlier, much lesser friend, thus doubling the insult by repeating the gesture. She was terminating their nine-year-long friendship by not even reading what Dean had to say to her.

And Joan did it because she was suspicious of people and the thorns they can inflict. She was willing to do this to her "best friend" rather than risk tearing open Dean's letter and finding recriminations or pleas for help. Better to return it unlooked at.

"All the better to pay back the sniveling, little queer," he gritted aloud. Dean slammed the letter against his typewriter.

All the better to skewer the eunuch who didn't even want to sleep with you! At last—a full-flowing, unimpeachable reason to put the despicable "queer" in his place, to sever the relationship, to bludgeon it and bury it forever!

And then on top of everything else, Dean fell in love with an Englishman who did not love him. Fighting all the way, he began to share the paroxysms of LOVE that Joan wrote about. He was in the midst of a novel showing that too much intimacy exhausts lovers, that romantic love is far more destructive than it is good for people—and still Dean fell into the eviscerating whirlpool of a Great Passion, loving somebody who did not love him, who had a lover already, and who wanted to make his lover jealous by using Dean. Helpless with

longing, realizing his absurdity, Dean got drunk in the afternoons so that he wouldn't stay awake and ache at the rejection he had received when he'd moved closer to the Englishman, blubbering like any teenage ninny because he couldn't have what he wanted, the first man he had ever felt such an enervation of feeling for.

He survived it all. He vowed he would prevail, sipping beer, which he found vile, to knock out consciousness, typing unrelentingly at his novel. He plunged forward, knowing that no adult should die for lust.

And after months of typing, or pouring his emotions into the book, it was rejected. Dean's literary agent (and Joan's) had abandoned him earlier because he had pressed her for royalty reports (despite the contract, none came for a year), because he had begged her for any word, any hope at all. His publisher would not tell him if he was making any money. Dean was unable to pay his rent, to buy a shirt without wrenching his budget. The book market had changed. Queers were out, a fad, publishers said. They didn't sell. Most people didn't want to read about their perverted wounds, did not want to learn anything new about other kinds of human beings or to recognize the common humanity in "perverts." They wanted boy-girl treacle or boy-girl heartthrob: the same old stories, comfortably told in precious, slightly varied ways. Nothing about the "misfits," as Dean's hometown newspaper headlined the review of his novel that belatedly appeared in its pages. No, people were quite content with cigarette-holder fairies, objects of ridicule and titters, paper cut-outs, minor figures in cheap movies!

Even gay readers wanted "happiness," flimsy romances, flattering images instead of

honesty. Nobody wanted Dean's writing, not even the unknown presses. He was stuck with the manuscripts in his desk. Agents wouldn't even look at them or turned them down because they were "too downbeat," because the market was "changed." Why didn't he write about "regular" people—straight people! He was a one-book author, somebody who had barely squeaked in the literary world and was an unknown has-been, while Joan was already being discussed for the Pulitzer, for the Nobel Prize. It was the Time of the Woman, not the Queer. (She had even changed the dedication of her collection of stories to somebody else.)

To keep his head above water, Dean managed to secure again the teaching job in Asia that he despised—with the military, with tired, often dumb students, non-academic, nonreading types, of necessity giving many of them D's, hurting them, if college credit was to mean anything at all, contributing to their histories of defeat; with fly-specked classrooms and too many papers to grade. Freshman composition after ten years of teaching. With his tail between his legs, he had to go back, grateful for even that job. He felt that Joan was sending him back to sewage-smelly Asian military bases in the middle of nowhere. She had not lifted a finger to help him. She could have gotten his work noticed in the right places, gotten someone else to review his novel, helped in some way—or at least have made the attempt, however futile, however much the gesture came to nothing. Instead she had written: "Nobody helped me with my first book." And thus he would have no other books. For he didn't write about maddened heterosexual romances or homosexual ones either, telling readers about the Depths of their Passions, about the momentousness of Death in Love. No, he told them how people (including himself) sanctify and glorify their dowdy lusts, myopic in their self-delusions. But he was out of tune with the times, and condemned to go unpublished.

He vowed he would not go down alone. Before Joan could win the Nobel Prize, or any other prizes, he would demonstrate to her the truth of her dread of the universe, her fear about the fragility of human lives. He would murder her in the spiral of her triumphs, with all her crimes upon her head. It would even up the score—with the balance heavier on his side, he knew, but then that was one of the "ironies of life."

Dean even realized amidst his festering hatred, that he was rationalizing his murder: Joan was the symbol of all his personal frustration. She had been despicable and mean-spirited, but mostly she was a depository of all his wants and failures! Dean knew this—and yet he wanted to punish her, to lavish her with death! She had tormented him with humiliation and slashes of contempt. Now he would pay her back full measure with one resolute act of vengeance!

Her murder would rid the world of a too prolific writer, unclog the fiction market so that somebody else could squeeze a word in edgewise—Joan also wrote under another name! He considered the bizarre consequences—that it would make her more famous still, the genius cut off at the height of her powers, assassinated before she had a chance to deteriorate. He would apotheosize her into a Keats or a Shelley! Yet at the same time Dean would gain an audience for his own work. His themes about gay people would get through, distorted and garbled and tinged with shock and annoyance at his excess, the art

ignored in the scandal, but they would get through at last! He felt that what he had to say was much more significant and fresher than what Joan wrote. His real fear was that people would merely yawn. Horrors had become a penny a pound. Yet, he told himself, with a tragedy of such obvious waste, people would begin to change their sexual attitudes. Dean knew he was being preposterous and melodramatic. But a murder is what it would take! The world wouldn't pay attention to wellreasoned arguments, to impassioned "stories." It cared only about savagery and mayhem. Well, he would give it what it would pay attention to. He would give it Joan Cheryl Holmes' corpse to eat!

Thus he returned to the United States soon after she and her husband did in the summer after their sabbatical leave. Dean knew where they lived and made his plans—he simply waited in the bushes beside their garage, looking at the rich, irregular stones of their courtyard, at the tidy brick house where a famous critic had come to interview Joan a few months before. He waited for several hours with the aluminum shovel from their garage in his hands, every once in a while massaging a newly grown wart on his forefinger. Neither she nor her husband came home for hours and hours. Dean lost count of the time, although he could see the sun sinking like a rotten peach on the river behind him.

Then the lights went on in their house, and Dean wondered if Joan and Cal had been inside all the time. He peeked into the window at the side, touching the powdery white brick. No one. Not even Kitty and Fluffy were inside. For Joan had had them put to sleep before she had gone abroad. But only an automatic timer had turned the lights on as a precaution against

thieves. Was Joan at the university typing in her office? Dean imagined her ghoulishly transforming one of her colleagues' misfortunes into a story to win a prize with. She had won many awards for capitalizing on the misfortunes of people she knew, including Dean's. Even now she might be rising from her typewriting, besotted with the blood of someone, smearing her bat guano around with her shoes as she removed the paper from the carriage. He would drive a stake through her heart! Dean stood in the dry summer bushes hiding, not angry, clutching the handle of the shovel, waiting.

At dark she came home alone. (He felt relieved, not wanting to kill her husband too.) He wondered if Cal had left her. He hoped not, because that would make her pitiable, and it would be harder to kill a pathetic creature instead of the ruthless Normal Nazi that she seemed to him. Maybe Cal was coming later in the other car, the Volkswagen, their sop to frugality. Maybe he was upstairs in their house asleep.

But here Joan was at last, at long last—getting out of the car in the courtyard. Her majesty is opening the garage door herself. Dean half-grinned, watching the gauzy white sweater and pale slacks that were Joan, like a moth in the darkness. She looked boney, but he was not put off by the appearance of weakness. He knew better. He knew that she was adamantine inside.

When Dean stepped out of the darkened bushes, with the shovel raised, her mouth slackened. And then she recognized him. "Oh, you!" she said, snorting. "What do you want?" The tone was crisp, business-like; Dean was another troublesome "fan" who had somehow gotten her address through chicanery, to be

dismissed in a second of petulance, sent off scampering. "I don't want to talk to you!" she said loudly, pulling the cord on the garage door to shut it. But he raised the shovel that she evidently couldn't see and stopped the door from closing. Joan heard the metal clang, and Dean could feel her breath stop. "What do you want? I don't think we can ever be friends again!"

"God, who wants to be friends with you?"
Dean replied, tempted to say more, to threaten her with the shovel until she shrieked for mercy, begged him for a favor. Until she got down on her knees and sniveled and whimpered for a crumb of compassion! Until she wept trenches in her pasty cheeks!

"Well, goodbye then," she said.

He felt foolish. She was going to walk away. She was going to go into her house and leave him standing in the courtyard like a jerk who couldn't even say what he felt about her. "How could you make me **beg** you? How could you make me **beg** you?" His voice rose. "Goddamn you! Goddamn you, you stingy, despicable, humiliating bitch!"

"Shut your mouth! You vulgar freak! You tried to **use** me!"

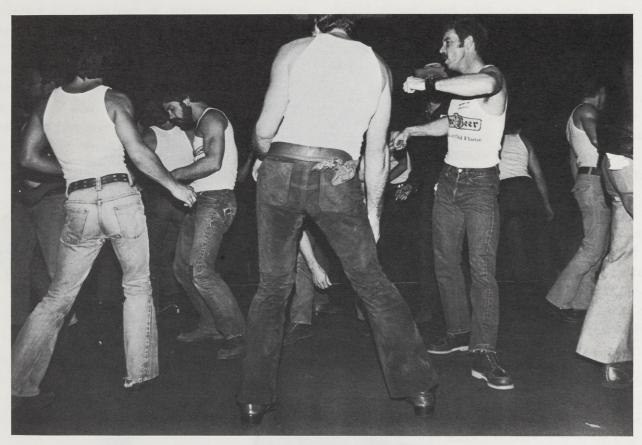
"Wait! I—I—You're so stingy you could

bend down and pick up a dime with your asshole!"

He slammed the aluminum shovel down on her head with all the force he could muster. She fell down at once, soundless, not even a groan. He waited for her to try to rise. But there was no movement. Dean touched the sprawled body in the darkness and poked the scoop of the shovel at the head. She didn't seem to be breathing. No more fight than that? Was she dead already? Dean raised the shovel and crushed it into the skull. Then again. It must be her brains! It must be the fertile soil of her imagination that he shattered and scattered and splattered on the courtyard stones. It had to be the mind that he destroyed, the gray coils chopped out of the skull and left to air themselves in the clean summer night....

Looking down at the stilled, night-blackening, breathless corpse, Dean began to cry. Sincere, unstifled tears cut into his face as he had cut into Joan's brains. For now she was dead, irretrievably dead. He would not be able to hate her anymore. He felt empty, useless, drained and yet unfulfilled. She had robbed him even then. He had murdered his revenge. For she was dead and he had nothing to live for.





PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT HOPKINS

LIKE MANY MIDDLE-AGE HOMOSEXUALS, I AM DEEPLY SUICIDALLY DEPRESSED—EATEN UP BY SEVERE REMORSE LINKED WITH LUST, YOUTH-NOSTALGIA, THE NEED FOR SOMETHING (SOMEONE) TO LIVE FOR, AND THE ALMOST CANCERLIKE INABILITY TO TOLERATE THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN WHAT PHYSICALLY I WAS, WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO BE, WHAT I LUST AFTER—ALL AS OPPOSED TO WHAT AGE HAS REDUCED ME TO. I DO NOT BELIEVE I CAN LIVE, OR WANT TO LIVE, WITHOUT LOVE... YET A GLANCE IN THE MIRROR GIVES ME THE ODDS I NOW FACE IN EVER AGAIN FINDING A MATE.

...a thought from a literary collage
by David Wray

FROZEN FRAMES OF A LAST MEETING

by Daisy Aldan

Fill light diffused:

CLOSE UP:

"Desires-tu me voir?"

PAUSE. MEDIUM SHOT: You disrobe and set aside the covers (What a pure cruel strategy!)

My virginal eyes become the camera.

(Slowed Motion.) Begin voyage of the continent of your reposing body. CUT TO: My quiet

(C.U.) sophisticated hands. PAN: stem of throat;

(Superimpose white jasmine); slope of shoulders;

TRACKING: cool arms; (Super. melancholy cranes);

sleeping domes of breasts; carving cove of waist;

curving over (R.) flank; fragile breathing belly;

(Super. water lilies); PAUSE at dark triangle of the Secret Garden; TRACKING: thighs, legs, ankles, toes; (Superimpose Grecian Sounion. Moonlight.)

TITLE: (Caps.) O M N I P R E S E N T!

(Thus in feigned innocence, and silent, you summoned gods, who placed you, naked and unsensuous, like the white Body of Night, into the blood-stream of forever, where those frozen frames would move, in memory or dream.)

SOMETIMES SHE SCREAMS IN HER SLEEP...

by Daisy Aldan

She returns from escape to small Italian cities littered with tattered damask-draped cathedrals in whose dank crypts heavy as rancour, she tarried to study embalmed corpses; from processions of the faithful fixed, their skin the color of chestnuts; of silver crucifixes, and glass coffins bearing bleeding Christs, and venerated mummies of county saints in satin; and hers were among the dirges which swept the throng. In churches of Acqui, Alessandro, Alassio, veiled in black she sat in straight-backed chairs, intoning litanies during long rituals, groping for light among the weeping candles and lilies. In incensescented tombs of buried kings where electrified ancient oil-lamps glowed on stone sarcophagi, she meandered, and in halls of stelae of Coptic women, whose large dark almond eyes resembled yours, and probed Anubi bearing their souls to the Land of the Dead.

Eyes oblique, and mouth a Eumenides curve of grief, she told everyone she met that you had died.

She placed small sacrifices at the Shrine of Death:
lipstick and dances, and wore half-mourning grey.

In Occult books she roamed seeking solace, but sorrow grew, in trials recorded, more poignant over

that threshold. She cried: —A volcano may erupt at any moment, and we, pas etre prets

pour l'autre monde! — She became accident-prone: Spiders fell from the ceiling onto her hair, She smashed into a glass door; was clawed by a cat she petted.

She swore that on Tuesdays and Fridays, she felt a chill cross her arm, and your cold lips her forehead.

I preceded her to the house. I swept away dead carrion flies cluttering the doorway; unshrouded and dusted a month's grey dust from the tables and chairs; discarded the funeral bouquets, the dried leaves of the plants on the terrace; flung open the windows; brought back the singing canary. When she returned to the house, I held out my sunlit hands: She covered her eyes. I offered her my land and my love. She answered: — I am at home with these doilies, wooden landscapes in frames; these family albums. — . She veiled the doors and windows with your heavy embroidered drapes. Each day she waters Death and keeps it growing. At evening, she draws aside a corner of the curtain, and notes the pthisic glow of the moon on the floor. A star may fall, or a pale blue radiance stream to the sea. She waits for Tuesdays and Fridays when a chill

Sometimes she screams in her sleep in the bed where you died.

crosses her arm: And she has begun to write in a handwriting not her own, words which you guide.

B U D D I E S

A Play In One Act (For Charles Mitchell)

By Maurice Kenny

Time: The present; very late afternoon.

Place: El Paso, Texas.

Setting: A shabby hotel room.

Characters:

Pat—Blond young man in cowboy clothes.
Billy—Fair young man in levis and sandals.

Scene: (A small room in a cheap hotel between the Mexican district and the tenderloin of El Paso, Texas. The room contains a low double bed with a dull green cover, a single wooden chair, and a dresser with the words "Call 888-2223" printed with a felt pen across the foggy mirror. There is no closet, but hooks have been hammered into the plaster walls for hanging clothes. One door in the left corner leads to the bathroom. The walls have been papered with a green design now fainted and stained by streaks of yellow, obvious water leaks, over-flows from rooms of the floor above. The only window (onto a back alley) bluish-green has curtains hanging cheerlessly, clean but frayed. A single naked light bulb and chain dangle over the shabby room. There seems an institutional air, or police precinct pall, to the room, which holds the quality of refuge for an old man, perhaps a ranch hand, too old and poor even to recognize or care for more comfortable quarters in which to eek out a dull and empty retirement. The room is incongruous with the personalities of the two young man who enter to spend the night. Their variety, vitality seem to break through the ceiling and crush back the walls.)

PAT: (Neatly dressed in a metallic blue cotton shirt, pocket decorated with purple and yellow threads; grey-blue pants that taper off the thigh, hang above dusty leather

boots. Moderately tall, slender to wirey, his stance appears relaxed but erect. His almost constant smile is warm but the flicker of comic suspicion scoffs at everything through the deceiving merry eyes. He slumps rather than walks. His thin hands are busy poking questioningly at this and that. He carries a shaving kit.) This is it. (Enters hesitantly. Peeps about.) Bed's clean. (Looks under.) No TV. (Places his white cowboy hat on the dresser.)

(Dressed in levis and sandals and a BILLY: plum-colored shirt opened to the fifth button and exposing a husky chest, he forces a height he does not naturally possess. Though short, his stocky build of heavy thighs and arms gives the impression of massive strength. There is a doubting, almost defensive air to his slight movements and speech although he moves quietly, quickly with the calculated steps of a dancer or the grace of a panther. His face is sober and allows no hint to his thought or motives. His longish fair hair is in need of brushina. He carries a black tote bag slung over his shoulder: a large scarlet handkerchief hangs from a hole in the bag.) Where's the john? (Enters; backs out.) There's only one towel.

PAT: We gonna be here long enough to use more than one? (Flops down on the bed.)

BILLY: We'll share it! (Enters bathroom and calls out.) I couldn't hold it longer.

PAT: (Modestly goes to close bathroom door; changes his mind.) You know, that bus station sure was pretty crowded. (Sits on bed, testing the springs.) Lots of people goin' lots

a places. All those little kids...those mamas.

BILLY: (Sound of tinkling water.) Can't hear you!

PAT: I said the bus station was crowded...with a lotta kids and their mamas. An' a lot cooler there than here. (Raises window.) There's wind in the alley, anyway. (Louder.) That station was crowded. I was pretty nervous.

BILLY: (Flushes toilet. Enters zipping fly.)
Mangy place. The usual garreted light bulb.
Just a reminder of what you'll look like
dangling. The eternal symbol of the poor, the
traveler.

PAT: I ain't lonely. Are you? I ain't gonna hang either.

BILLY: (Smiles sarcastically.) Oh!

PAT: Whadda ya mean?

BILLY: (Still smiling, his hands stuck in his pants pockets.) Forget it! Nothing!

PAT: Bed's clean! Look! (Throws back covers.) See! (As if inspecting for bedbugs.)

BILLY: Idiot! You won't find them that way. You have to wait until dark...then switch on the light...fast! I can see you haven't spent much time in hotels.

PAT: No, eh? Just about all my life. You wouldn't know that. I know you've hiked around pretty much! I haven't done anything but ride the roads. (Takes off his shirt and

neatly drapes it in on the chair back. Pushes fingers across the sheet.)

BILLY: No, I haven't. I haven't tripped around that much.

PAT: You got anything to eat in that bag?

BILLY: A banana! Oh! yeah! The cokes we got in the machine.

PAT: Break it out. I am hungry and I am thirsty. (Sunlight has fallen. Pat pulls light chain and the room is flooded by a glaring light.) It's a little soft. That mean it's rotten?

BILLY: Not necessarily. Hey! We should have picked up some hamburgers. (Strips to his undershorts.)

PAT: You always throw your clothes where they drop. Your mama never taught you anything? (Pat picks up the clothes.)

BILLY: We can get something to eat later, I guess. I'm pretty thankful for this coke.

BILLY: Right! (Both take husky swallows from the coke bottles.)

PAT: I'd like to take a shower. (As if reproved.) We paid for the whole thing!

BILLY: (Falls on bed.) Right! Hey! What were you saying about the bus station?

PAT: Pretty damn crowded. I was gettin' real worried. A lotta people gettin' on the bus for Albuquerque, and all those mamas. I get nervous with a lotta people bugging around.

(Billy turns back to Pat.) You got blackheads. Want me to pinch them out?

BILLY: (Horrified.) No! Why were you nervous?

PAT: Why was I nervous? You just don't know! You can't guess? (Sits on opposite side of bed.)

BILLY: No, I can't even guess. It doesn't make any difference to anybody.

PAT: Yes, it does, man. We happen to be strangers in this town...

BILLY: So! (Swallows coke.)

PAT: Man, you could be a cop. Or me. Or, shit, anybody. (Strips pants and undershorts. Covers quickly with the sheet. Folds clothes neatly and lays them beneath the pillow.) Anybody! No loitering signs all over the place. (Pause.) Coke's pretty hot now.

BILLY: Fuck El Paso! I have a ticket.

PAT: Yeah, but I don't.

BILLY: God damn! It's hot in here.

BILLY: Yeah! Pull back the curtain. (Stares at Billy.) You know, you gotta lotta luck.

BILLY: Me? Why? (He appears more agitated than surprised.)

PAT: Just hear me out...you gotta lotta luck. (Waving the coke bottle.)

BILLY: ((Laughs.) I don't understand. I don't understand why you were nervous in the bus station. And I don't know why you say I've got a lot of luck.

PAT: You gotta lotta luck! You just sit right there an' I'll tell you why you got luck. This is a fandangoed world. There 's a whole lotta nuts dancin' in it. Maybe I'm a nut. You wouldn't know. The bus station was pretty crowded. There might have been a dozen nuts waltzin' around that place. Maybe I was one. (Lights two cigarettes and passes one to Billy.) There are some crazy kooks in these parts. Sun dance country, man! You know how many guys carry guns? No, you probably don't. Why, hell, man, I might even carry a gun. I might like to watch you tap dance.

BILLY: You don't. (Staring out the window, the curtain pulled aside.)

PAT: Now you don't know that. Not that I would hurt nobody. I'm a peaceful guy. I don't like violence.

BILLY: You don't have a gun! (Turns slowly to face Pat, eye to eye.)

PAT: I might.

BILLY: You don't.

PAT: You don't know that.

BILLY: You don't have a gun. You are in this bed. You are clean naked. Unless you have a barretta shoved up your...you don't have a gun. (Satisfied, looks away.)

PAT: O.K. (Silence.) Hey! Did I tell you the one about the pretty chick that got in the elevator with two guys. Well, one guy pushed the button for the second floor; the second guy for the fourth, and the chick for the top. The elevator stopped and the first man got off, and as the door closed the pretty chick yelled "Ouch!" "What happened, lady?" the second guy asked. "He geesed me," the chick said. "No, Miss, you mean goosed." "I mean geesed," the chick said. "He used two fingers." (Laughs.)

BILLY: Come on! Your jokes are crummy.
All of them. Even the gun joke. (Stares out window.)

PAT: No joke. (Rolls into a ball under the sheet.)

BILLY: Do you really have a gun? Where?

PAT: I might have. You don't know. You pretty damn well couldn't know. (Gooses Billy.)

BILLY: Watch it! I'm sensitive.

PAT: (laughs.) It could have been a gun...not my finger. (Unrolls, makes a tent with his foot.)

BILLY: You are some freak.

PAT: Freak! I could be. You wouldn't know. (Pulls sheet over his head, flails his arms as if pretending to be a ghost shrouded.)

BILLY: First, the crowded bus station. Then you're nervous. Next, bedbugs. Fourth, the

gun bit. Five, your lousy jokes. Six, guns again. And seven, you're a goose-freak. And last, last, you are in this bed naked. (Rises. Erect. Stares hard, long.)

PAT: (After a short dead silence.) Score one! That's why I say you gotta lotta luck.

BILLY: (Reaching for the black bag.) Why wait so long to use it?

PAT: Maybe I like my fun first. I could have a gun.

BILLY: I could have a gun in my bag.

PAT: Exactly. You could have a gun in your bag. An' as you said, man, I am sitting here... naked... waiting. (Laughs.) You could shoot me and run the hell outta the door.

BILLY: You could shoot me and run out.

PAT: Now you get it. (Sits up. Pulls the sheet to his nose.)

BILLY: (Unperturbed.) Are you going to shoot me?

PAT: That's not the point, creep. I could shoot you. I could tear the bloody guts outta you. You're pretty fair game. And you don't know if I gotta gun. No way!

BILLY: You know, there is just a small, a mighty small chance that I have a gun, too.

PAT: In Arizona guys carry guns. Lotta guys. Pretty much all of them.

BILLY: So what are you worried about. This is Texas. No man's land. Gateway to ol' Mexico. (Drops the black bag to the side of the bed.)

PAT: Hell, man, I know it. (Pulls sheet over his head.)

(Gooses Billy.) Hey! 'member how we shook those Mexican pimps' minds when they asked us if we wanted to have some fun with a chick. Bastards pulled my sleeve. What did I say! Just what the hell did I say? (Tugging on Billy's shoulder.)

BILLY: You were very comical. Very funny. (Shruqs off Pat's hand.)

PAT: I said, (Laughing.) I said wait a minute, amigo. I gotta ask my boy-friend. Man that wiggled their tree. (Quickly throws off sheet, exposing his body. Quickly draws it back across his flesh.)

BILLY: (Laughing.) And they said we got boys, too.

PAT: Creeps. You can't go with them pimps. They'll kick the bloody brains outta ya.

BILLY: Or place a cold steel nose in your ribs.

PAT: Right! Right! They probably got guns.
A guy wouldn't know for sure. Anymore 'an you'd know I gotta gun.

BILLY: You don't. You didn't go to Juarez to buy a gun. You went to buy a white cowboy hat... that one over there.

PAT: And you for **cheap** American cigarettes. (Remembering, takes a pull on his lighted cigarette and puts it out.)

BILLY: And you bought me a bullfight poster. No guns!

PAT: I coudda bought a gun when you were talkin' to that greaser, that ol' Mexican lady.

BILLY: She said she was glad to hear I could speak Spanish. Thought she could sell more junk... pots and paper bulls. (Hostile.) Maybe her daughter.

PAT: That's her. You talked a lot with that ol' lady. Turned out too cheap to buy anything.

BILLY: I'm not cheap. I just don't have much money.

PAT: How much you got? (Rolls over on his stomach.)

BILLY: None of your damn... (Smiles.)... after the hotel rent... eight dollars.

PAT: Eight! That's all? (Jumps up and sits against the bedpost.)

BILLY: That's all. Eight.

PAT: How you gonna get to Denver on that?

BILLY: Don't worry about it. Are you going to shoot me for the eight bucks?

PAT: There's creeps mean enough to. No, I

told you I'm a peace-lovin' guy. I don't like violence. There'd be other ways of gettin' it... if I wanna'd it.

BILLY: Then why carry a gun... if you do? (Picks his teeth with a toothpick found in his shirt pocket.)

PAT: I only said I might have a gun. You wouldn't know. I coudda bought a gun in Juarez easy when you were talkin' to that lady.

BILLY: You could even have taken a gun from your suitcase when we went back to the bus station to get cigarettes from your locker.

PAT: Right! Right! Or maybe had it under my shirt all the time. Had it right on me all the damn time. You wouldn't know. Maybe it's under the sheets right now. (Moves his hand as if to reach a gun in a holster.)

BILLY: Only damn thing under that sheet is your naked ass. (Cold, hostile.)

PAT: I coudda buried it while you were pissing in the john. You wouldn't know. You really wouldn't... really. Man, cause you don't know nothin'. Shit! you don't even know my damn name.

BILLY: True, I don't. Doesn't matter. It didn't matter, still doesn't matter. I don't want to know your name. Knowing your name won't change the fact that you might have a gun, might shoot. If you have one.

PAT: I don't know your name either. (Pause.) Hey! What is your name?

BILLY: Billy... (Pause.)

PAT: (Laughing.) Billy!... hell, Billy! Billy the Kid! (Jumps up and down on the bed.)

BILLY: UH! Bill...yeah! I'm Billy the Kid. (As though convinced of the new identity.)

PAT' I believe it, man. An' I'm Pat Garrett. Howdydo? (Mock handshake.)

BILLY: Stands to reason. We were always good friends... until... remember you shot me in the middle of the night in the darkness. I was in my underwear. Just got out of the bed with my woman. (Drops his hand to his breast as if shot.)

Pat: You're crazy, Billy... Billy the Kid. I could have a gun now. An' shoot you again sittin' there in your underwear. I could shoot an' run out. You never saw me before in your life. An' I'm willin' to bet you're never gonna see me again.

BILLY: But the room clerk would remember you. We signed the register together.

PAT: That's o.k. cause I just look like any other blond cowboy in the whole damn west... Texas to California, Montana to the border. I just look like everybody, an' nobody same time. I always have. (Folds arms across his chest, satisfied.)

BILLY: Pat Garrett, I'm going to call your cards... if you want to shoot... go ahead. (Turns his back as if readying for a draw.)

PAT: You're too easy a target. Shit! Why Page 44

you make me say that? Why do you make me talk that crap? I'm a lovin' man, I told you. I'm just what my mama taught me to be...peacelovin'. But I could have a gun. For protection! That's why you are crazy. That's why you gotta lotta luck.

BILLY: You'd shoot for eight bucks. (Standing, his hands drop to his side.)

PAT: You coudda hauled my ass up here for my dollars.

BILLY: How much have you got?

PAT: In the whole damn world? (Stretches his arms as if to embrace the world.)

BILLY: In the whole damn world! (Still facing the open window.)

PAT: Two dollars and sixty-nine cents. (Slowly, exactly, not without a trace of pleasure.)

BILLY: You can't get to Phoeniz on that... let alone L.A. ... if that's where you're going! (Turns about.)

PAT: That's true. But if you shoot me, well, hell, man, Billy the Kid, you still couldn't get to Denver. On the other hand... I could get as far as Gallup, or Tombstone.

BILLY: You don't have a gun. You said so.

PAT: You don't know. An' I ain't never said I didn't. I said I might have.

BILLY: I've got to go to the john.

PAT: Hey, Billy the kid... you still trust me?

BILLY: Sure, Pat. You say you're a loving man, a peace-loving man... not violent. You hate violence... so why shouldn't I have a little faith. (Goes to bathroom.)

PAT: Where you from? (Loudly but as if to the door.)

BILLY: Newark.

PAT: New York? The city? (Almost shouting.)

BILLY: Newark, New Jersey. Where are you from?

PAT: Mormon country... big Salt Lake City, Utah. I would suppose a New Yorker to be a little more foxy when talkin' with strangers... in El Paso, specially in a bus station, very specially naked in a crummy hotel room. (Toilet flushes. Billy returns.)

BILLY: (Pulls off light. Climbs into bed.) I've always had the idea that Mormons are men of God... loving and peaceful.

PAT: I said I was from Mormon country, Billy... not that I was a Mormon.

BILLY: I wish you'd tell another of your lousy jokes. Your bedbugs are beginning to itch.

PAT: O.K., Billy the Kid. I just will. (Pause.)
Now just let me think... Oh! yeah! This
traveling salesman, see, stops for the night.
And the lady says yes I can give you a place

to sleep, but with my little son. So when the salesman goes to bed after the little son he says to himself, I'll take example from the kid and do just what the kid does. The kid got outta the bed and kneeled down. The salesman, thinkin' the kid was sayin' his prayers, got up, kneeled down and crossed hisself. The kid turned to the salesman, his head bent down in serious business, and the little kid said... "Hey, Mister, the pot's on this side of the bed. My maw's gonna get awful mad when she sees that wet rug!"

BILLY: You're sick.

PAT: (Laughing.) Hey! Billy the Kid, how's your aim?

BILLY: My aim?

PAT: Yeah!

BILLY: No aim... I have no aim. And no gun. Get that nonsense out of your skull. I came up here for a talk... a little... And sleep. Not to kill, or be killed, Pat Garrett.

PAT: You could have a gun in that black bag.

BILLY: I don't play games... I have no gun in that bag.

PAT: You lie... I know pretty damn well you lie. You have a gun.

BILLY: (Agitated, nervous, stoops to pick up shirt.) Pat Garrett, you are low. I know it. Your freaky mind has tricked...

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PAT: Waitta minute. I don't know you, an' I don't owe you... nothing. I looked and talked with this dude in a bus station. I talked with him. Said you were crossing the country... so was I... that's all I know. All you know is that I'm not mean, I ain't low... I am peace-loving. I don't like violence. All I said was you don't know if I gotta gun. An' you don't!

BILLY: (Laughing.) Pat Garrett, I trust you.

PAT: Kid, I trust you. But not with the lights off. (Throws sheet over him and goes to pull on the light.

BILLY: Think I'll catch a nap... then we can go out for some hamburgs. (Turns to sleep.)

PAT: Right.

BILLY: (Pause.) Pat?

PAT: Yeah! (Rolls over, sits up.)

BILLY: You tell the lousiest jokes I ever heard. (Sits up next to Pat.)

PAT: I know. (Throws leg over Billy.) You got goose pimples on the hairiest leg I ever touched.

BILLY: (Laughs.) What do you want for two dollars and sixty-nine cents... silk?

PAT: Or eight dollars.

BILLY: Those hanging bulbs always remind me of what I will look like hanging. (Pulls black bag closer to his side of the bed.) PAT: You never gonna hang.

BILLY: I know. It's just a feeling I always have when I see a bulb dangling from a peeling ceiling in a mangy hotel room. (Pensive, restless.)

PAT: Never happen. (Pulls out his pants from under the pillow. Drops hand into pocket.)

BILLY: Who knows, Pat Garrett! (Drops hand into the black bag.)

PAT: Hey! Billy the Kid. (Raises empty hand, drops pants to floor.)

BILLY: Yes, Pat Garrett. (Raises empty hand and pushes bag away.)

PAT: Why don't you turn off that damn light. (Lights two cigarettes.) They can see right up that alley through the window.

BILLY: (Pulls light chain.) **They**—whoever they are—can't see anything up that windy alley.

PAT: You're o.k., Billy the Kid.

BILLY: You're o.k., too, Pat. Let's grab some sleep.

PAT: Right. Then go out for some hamburgers. (Both settle under the sheet.)

BILLY: Right.

PAT: (Curls toward Billy.) I'm all sweaty.

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(Pause.) Man, that bus station was crowded. All those little kids and mamas. I was pretty nervous. Really. You might have been a cop.

BILLY: (Laughs.) I might have been. (Curls toward Pat.) You've got warts! (Long silence.)

PAT: Billy, you my friend?

BILLY: Yeah! I'm your friend, Pat. Get some sleep.

PAT: Will you stay my friend? (Anxious.)

BILLY: Damn it, get some sleep. (Softer.)
Yes, Pat, I'll stay your friend.

PAT: I got it. Let's travel together. We can get jobs washin' dishes or cookin' in a spoon. Make some dollars and get the hell outta here. Buddies do things together, don't they, Billy?

BILLY: Yeah!

PAT: We've got some good places to go to. Tucson, Denver, Frisco. Ever been to Market Street in Frisco? A freak out, really.

BILLY: No. (Not particularly interested.)

PAT: It's tough. We gotta stick together when we get there, Billy.

BILLY: Right. (Spoken to pacify Pat.)

PAT: Billy... don't ever tell nobody. I ain't... I ain't had a... buddy before.

BILLY: It's o.k., Pat. Neither have I.

PAT: I sure liked those greasers' tacos and the drinks. Wow! Rose petals. An' rice. Crazy. (Pause.) You speak a lotta Spanish. Where'd you ever learn so much in New York.

BILLY: Newark, Pat. Newark, New Jersey. I had a lot of Spanish friends.

PAT: Oh! (Knock at the door.) There's a knock on the devil's door!

BILLY: They've got the wrong room. They'll go away.

PAT: Hell, Billy the Kid, we paid the fuckin' rent.

BILLY: Right!

(A key is fitted into the lock; turns; the door is flung open throwing a shaft of harsh light onto the two young men in the bed.)

BILLY: PAT: (Together.) What the shit! Shut that door!

ROOM CLERK: (An old man, typical character of shabby hotel lobbies.) That's them, officer.

THEME FOR THE PROM

BY Dan Fee (for atkin and all the rest)

O my sweet love.
We never were thirteen, fourteen,
You and I:
Soft blond and burning hair
Kindles above azure eyes, brute
Fits of arrogant desire
Convulse tight yearning navel.
Belly aches to arch for
Soaring celestial music: your
Voice, beyond all sounds the
Precocious call, We! We!

O delirious gasping pretense.
Lungs fill with phantom, crying want,
Arms grow heavy with numb adolescence.
Sweat clings to fair downy lips,
Moistening dry mouth
With a fantasy of yours.
Crazed hands cup impetuous hard,
Willing back the sweetness,
Pulling out thick, sticky seconds
Of warm, buttery pleasure!

O my sweetbread boy.
Thirteen, fourteen, I
Bore my heft imagined as your
Heft. Lankness, thigh on thigh.
We might have rooted willowy
Limbs in artless loins, clasped
Heart to budding heart.
Our youth would have known
Ten hundred delights in changing,
Simple seasons: stand! blood-loamed
Earth, promontory. Brace! aortic
Freshet stream. Quicken summermoist,
Confounding green eye: bawdy
Amazing Eaglescouts!

O how we are not now.
Two ardent supple striplings
Lost beyond strong reach,
Absenting impossible boyhoods
From bitter, wishful memory.
Come. Return.
Pierce my lonesome room,
Choking the air with semen
And rage.
Never allowed!
Never were we
Gaylove's thirteen, fourteen.

FIRE

by Arnie Kantrowitz

in the Square in the transvestite sitting on the corner in the Square still on the curb in the Square at already eleven a.m. the next day knees demurely agape to the blind hurry in the Square red racing shoes fallen unlaced skimpy dark velvet dress crushed forehead still aglitter hair ablaze Maenad mad and badly in need of a shave perhaps his youth's mind fled fast her eyes vacated with speed perhaps my brother my sister the falling paint will not do around the eyes the artless eyes in the Square perhaps a would-be phoenix in want of a match

I AM A WHORE

by Michael Shernoff

I am a whore, I'm continuously selling myself to anyone who will have me, but not only as a sexual recepticle. That would not be so bad. I prostitute myself emotionally and socially. I was once told that I was greedy because I wanted everyone. Greedy is not correct, Needy is more accurate. Frantically I sell myself to people by trying to impress them with how nice I am, or how well I cook. or how smart I am. or how well I suck dick. I am a junky for affection and appreciation.

Someday I will cease to sell myself short.

I'll discover those qualities within myself that will cause me to grow secure within myself, for myself, and stop my act.

When the act is over for me
I will learn who I am.
I will no longer be fearful of feeling or even of being hurt, there is so much love inside of me, that when I win this battle to tear down the walls and evict the actor my own beauty will startle myself.

THE COMMERCIAL GAY PRESS—A Hit-And-Miss Overview

by Tom McNamara

(This review, in another form, originally appeared in Boston's **Gay Community News**.)

As the gay population has "exploded", as if by a kind of urgent psychic intensity, a communications medium has grown with it in the form of the commercial gay periodicals. There are some who would say these magazines and newspapers have become an appendage to the legitimate strivings for what is meant by the concept of Gay Freedom, in the total and anarchistic sense. But it looks like, for the time being, and, under the demands of the particular system of government and economics at work even in such a sub-culture as the "Gay World," the commercial gay media are not only necessary but needed.

It seems to this writer, perhaps proprejudiced, that gay media, in general, reflect an intangible essence that all straight media lack. I call it the gay consciousness. And I can't easily identify it, define it, and isolate it. It is a subtle essence that, itself, defines what many call "gay" in reference to many things—art works, music, writing, photographs, etc. And, even when the commercial gay media are at their most money-grubbing worst, I find in it an appeal that is lacking even from the most "altruistic" of capitalist media at their best. Hmmmm.

For many gays the commercial gay media are the prime media that reach and change them, for better or for worse. Perhaps the prime example known to all is the Los Angeles (now San Mateo) originated newspaper **The**

Advocate, a bi-weekly of large circulation and even larger readership that seems to constantly find itself at cross-purposes with just about every liberation-minded group in the country as well as with its own cash-register "consciousness." The Advocate has been widely and justly criticized and harshly criticized, too. In the opinion of many, not harshly enough. It is like the L.A. Free Press or Village Voice of the gay world. Mild-mannered, bespectacled and hardly ever Super.

Like almost every newspaper, The Advocate (I call it The Aardvark, frequently) is at the whims of its owners and reflects their consciousness or lack thereof. The Advocate seems to like to over-sensationalize when it thinks it meets its purposes, one of the root purposes seemingly to fill its tills with gay coin every two weeks or so. It overplayed the horror aspects of the New Orleans gay bar fire, for example, and tried to milk every last drop of exasperated confusion out of the Houston tragedies. When it's at its best, it features interesting feature stories on interesting "personalities," offers fair book reviews, a fair letter-to-the-editor's page, and some off-beat columns. It may become the N.Y. Times of "gaydom" in the future just through lack of competition, as long as it allows a variety of voices to speak in its pages.

Until recently, **The Advocate** was the only widely circulated commercial gay medium utilizing the newspaper format as its form. But recently a new "hard-core" publication, **Gaytimes**, started publishing (also out of Southern California, circulating through the "adult" bookstores, primarily and rapidly gaining a nationwide and international subscription base that will soon rival the **Advocate's** at the rate it is climbing. **Gaytimes** is a

rather successful attempt to transfer the \$6-a-shot magazine into a reasonably-priced combination of newsmagazine and "hard core" featuremagazine. It presents a remarkably upfront gay liberation image, guarantees interest with explicit photos of a rather high quality, runs a good selection of gay f-ckfiction, surprisingly perceptive book reviews, advice columns, editorials, motion picture and play reviews, etc.

The dominant position in the gay commercial magazines seems to be held by the publishers of QQ magazine, which used to be a quarterly named Queens Quarterly and now is a bi-monthly which sells mostly by subscription. You'd think that anyone who started off with a magazine named Queens Quarterly would have failed, but the **QQ** people now have three magazines doing very well and probably rake in around two million a year. QQ is quite ineptly done and seems aimed at the late 30's to early 70's market (that's where the money is, after all). It is extremely travel oriented, features over-built models from such photographers as AMG, Bruce, and the others who made their reputations primarily in the 1950's in such magazines as Young Physique, Demi-Gods, and others published by Joseph Weider and his brothers, the Canadians who set the pace for gay magazines by branching out from the "iron game" weightlifting journals as puritans like Bob Hoffman, publisher of Strength and Health, for instance, were afraid to do. QQ tries to carry on this tradition but it is a half-hearted effort at best, and the magazine is embarrassing when not outright dull.

In Touch is a West-coast magazine that's about a year or so into finding itself. It too takes the slick approach and reflects its California influence, which is apparent in its

interest in movie star interviews, Ah Men fashions, outdoor romps featuring two (always only two) Colt-types prancing usually in the mountains or the abundant beaches. In Touch keeps an eye on such phenomena as the glitterrock scene by using the first-person new journalism of a very talented young writer named Hugh Harrison, but it suffers from trying to merchandise itself to please its slick advertisers, catering to the West Coast "Emperor and Empress" syndrome, and overfeaturing a limited number of writers and photographers rather than reflecting the diversity of style and opinion that a true gay consciousness should represent. In Touch is struggling to find itself, but instead of having an eye on the sparrow as it should, seems to be overly concerned with what everyone will think if it isn't compulsively fashionable.

Vector magazine also tries for the "now" gay generation. Lately it has become less fleshy, more think-piece oriented, with some good fiction scattered here and there. It is trying to better itself, but its typographical errors and frequent mistakes in English are, to say the least, an embarrassment.

The Sentinel has come a long way in the past year, from a rag with numerous printing errors to a first-rate newspaper, with intelligent reviews and interviews by Roger Austen and others. The paper features columns by gay people of left and right opinion, even a column by a member of the San Francisco police department. This paper should continue to increase its influence and coverage.

The photo magazines to be found in "adult" bookstores certainly do not deserve commentary since they present no real editorial matter, but recently there have been attempts to try to make even these publications

reflect some "redeeming social value," probably as a prudent attempt to circumvent the new Supreme Court decisions with regard to obscenity. This might just well be what has motivated an outfit called Academy Press to publish two magazines for gay consumption along very rhetorical lines. Ecce Homo, their feature-picture magazine, features rather "softcore" photos to "illustrate" their "problem" approach. Their concept seems, beneath the surface, to be extremely anti-gay and is on the level of the female-directed "true love" magazines. You know, love is a problem, therefore... The Academy outfit has carried this to ridiculous extremes with the first (and only) issue of their magazine Quest, which is even more rhetorical, utilizing as it does a "question / answer" format. The first issue, unfortunately, contrasts the usual pictures of happy, healthy butchy types moping and groping with—are you ready for this?—color photos of people in the last stages of syphllis. I wonder why this straight-owned outfit is doing so badly in the gay market.

The gay commercial press is gay, if really at all, only secondarily and this is its great limitation. It is always compulsively commercial and reflects the "keep up with the married gay couple down the hall" mentality of not only its editors but its readership as well. It is psycho-politically only superficially interested in the real demands of Gay Liberation since were the Gay Liberation Ethic to triumph it would destroy the need for such metered fare. But for the time being, hundreds of thousands of gays plunk down their coin and support commercial magazines newspapers, much in the same way that lovestarved gays pour their hard-earned money into rip-off bars, terrible porn movies, and lessthan-the-best organizations. Of course, it is just a stage, but I, for one, can't wait until we are ready to jump the next bunch of hurdles.

REVIEW
THE EARLY HOMOSEXUAL RIGHTS MOVEMENT:
'Thorstad and Lauritsen have begun
to enlighten our darkness'

By Roger Austen

The recent publication of The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935) by John Lauritsen and David Thorstad underscores Dan Curzon's recently made point that gay literature is just now emerging from the Dark Ages into a sort of Renaissance. Dan was writing in terms of belles lettres, but his point is applicable to non-fiction as well, and the fact that a historical survey of gay rights had to wait until last year to get written and published is evidence that we are only just now beginning to find out about ourselves as we have existed / endured for the last 100 years.

What do you know, for instance, about what it was like to be gay in this country in 1915? 1890? Almost nothing, of course, because our stories used to be told only on police blotters and in medical textbooks and in a very few veiled novels. By reading the Lauritsen and Thorstad book, you'll not find out much in answer to these questions, because any sense of gay lib consciousness was slow in reaching these shores, but you will find out quite a lot of new information about what was going on in Europe a hundred years ago.

The concept of our being special—a third Page 53

sex—began with Ulrichs in Germany in the 1860s, and there was a great deal of legislating for gay rights in Germany by the turn of the century. By 1912, believe it or not, this sort of ad was appearing in German newspapers:

"REICHSTAG ELECTION! 3rd Sex! Consider this! In the Reichstag on May 31, 1905, members of the Center, the Conservatives, and the Economic Alliance spoke AGAINST you; but FOR you, the orators of the LEFT! Agitate and vote accordingly!"

There was even a gay lib film ("Different from Other People") made in Germany in 1919 by a group headed by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, and the authors do a good job of detailing all the contributions Hirschfeld made to the cause before he had to flee the Nazis. Of special interest are the pictures of Rosa von Braunschweig in male military drag and Baron von Teschenberg both in and out of female drag.

The authors then switch to England and focus on the early writings of Edward Carpenter, John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis. Carpenter was lecturing and publishing on "homogenic love" as early as 1895, but, as you can imagine, the Wilde trial brought the movement to a halt in England for quite a while.

And what was going on in the United States during this time?

Not much.

Walt Whitman, that sly old dodger, was disavowing any hint of homoeroticism in his Calamus poems—he cautioned Symonds against making "morbid inferences"—and according to the authors, the first American to speak out for gay rights was Emma Goldman in 1923. Her perspective was anarchistic and was achieved only after she had left this country and met Hirschfeld in Europe.

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What happened from 1925 to 1935 was that in both Germany and Russian gay rights were snuffed out by totalitarian regimes. The authors are fair in documenting the political aspects of the movement in both countries. While it is true that the impetus for early gay rights came from the liberals in Germany who were later beaten down by the Nazi right, it is also true that the first flush of sexual freedom announced after the Bolshevik revolution was during the 20s gradually undercut by the leftist rigidity of Stalinism. By 1935, gay people were being imprisoned in both countries.

The authors illustrate quaint misconceptions of uranianism by publishing photos from a 1903 German yearbook in which men were masculine, women were feminine but we, as the third sex, were pictures as pot-bellied hermaphrodites with hanky over face. They discuss the relationship of the early gay movement to socialism, the Wilde trial, and give sketches of Ulrichs, Hirschfeld, Carpenter, Whitman, and Sir Richard Burton (he of the Sotadic Zone theory: the more Mediterranean, for instance, the more gay). At the end of the book are two poems by Carpenter, and the one called "As a Woman of a Man" ends:

I will draw thee closer and closer,

I will drain thy lips and the secret things of thy body,

I will conceive by thee, Democracy.

The book has only 91 pages and is admittedly just a start into an area about which most of us are still in the dark. (This idea is conveyed by Eric Bentley's comment: "Thorstad and Lauritsen...have begun to enlighten our darkness.") This book will have to do, though, until Jonathan Katz gets out the longer book he is working on now in New York. The cost is \$2.25 and the publisher is Times Change Press, 62 W. 14th Street, NY, NY 10011.

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